

Balavin Kural

Balambika Divya Sangam

September 2012 Vol 2 Issue 5



Temples of India - a priceless heritage unveiled: page 9

Significance of water in Hinduism: page 15

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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DIGITAL LINKS

Digital version of the newsletter:

<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/61386694/>

[September2012/Newsletter_Sep_2012.html](http://dl.dropbox.com/u/61386694/September2012/Newsletter_Sep_2012.html)

What's new?

- By Smt. Asha Manoharan

This month's newsletter is bringing something new in addition to the existing items. This time we have introduced the temple visit's page which I will be writing. This is about the experiences we had while visiting these temples. These temples are not less than 600 years old. We saw these temples in a new light. This time around we visited the temples for their uniqueness and grandeur. We never had the thought about what these temples were offering us. For once we tried establishing contact with the Almighty and the *garbhagraham* and its silence instilled in us the purpose of our life and it drove home the fact that the oneness in God doesn't have to be in *arathi* and *abhishekam* but standing in front of the God with an open heart.

These temples have history behind them. They have stood there witnessing people come and go, smiling to themselves of events yet to come. We walked the path of Gnanasambandar, the temples he visited, where the songs which he had sung echo in those temples even today. It was an experience by itself, knowing fully well that one day Gnanasambandar had touched those temple pillars, sat on the same stones which we were sitting on today, resting at places where he had rested and standing at the altar which he once stood at, and sang hundreds of songs for lord Shiva and Ambal. That feeling drove away the ego in us, and helped us rebuild the devotion for the Lord. This visit made us look within us and transformed us into a being who understood what is ahead of us and helped us understand who we truly are. It was a pilgrimage like the olden days but with a modern twist. We rested, prayed and travelled like a true pilgrim and when we are true to the word God will never let us down. Here is an example of that.

It was *amavasya* and my sister's husband had to do his *tharpanam*. So he finished his *tharpanam* in the morning and we headed for Chidambaram that day. On the way we visited several temples, and we halted at Chidambaram for the night to see the *athajama pooja* which by itself is a soul rendering experience, about which I will be writing later. That night he had to take home food and not from any hotel anywhere, we didn't know what to do, but Athimbere was ready to sleep with just milk and some fruits. My sister and I were against that idea and wanted to find something for him to eat. So my sister said, "I know Bala will not let us down, let me take the first step to ask someone if they can provide him with some thing to eat." The *kurukal* who escorted us was our only resort, so she asked him if he could get something to eat for the night. He readily agreed and he told us to come home to collect dinner. He escorted us to his house and he gave us *idli*, *sambar* and *chutney*, and before we bid farewell, he came up to us and said, "I am a Bala *upasakar* and I have been reciting her name since a child." We were all shocked at those words and we remembered my sister saying, "Bala will not forsake us, she will do something, only we have to try." The group fell silent and all our thoughts were turned towards Bala, admiring her subtle ways which also gave us the strength to do the task that we set out for ourselves.

This teaser is an insight into the new page and what you can expect in the coming months. Hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did writing ...no...sorry typing it.

MALUR SRI BALAMBIKA TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

- A *Balalayam* has been constructed at the temple site.
- A *vathiyar* has also been appointed for performing *pooja* on a daily basis.
- Electric connection for the *Balalayam* will be added soon.
- A shed has been constructed as per the request of the *Sthapathi*, to accommodate additional workers.





Responsibility

Man himself is the maker of his own destiny.

He has none to blame since he alone is responsible for his own life.

He makes his own life for better or for worse.

He creates everything - grief, perils, and misfortunes.

It springs from the imperfections of heart and the mind.

**It is as a result of good and bad actions committed in the past,
under the influence of greed and delusion.**

**Since he brought it onto himself, it is within his power,
to overcome the bad effects and cultivate good nature.**

His behaviour is such that he is not able to solve problems without creating further problems.

He is reluctant to admit weakness.

He is not willing to shoulder responsibility.

His attitude is always to blame others for his failure.

**If he becomes more responsible for his actions,
then he can maintain peace and happiness within and make this world a better place.**

Divya Tattvam

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

The audio version of the Divya Tattvam *upanyasam* in Tamil, by Smt. Asha Manoharan, can be accessed here



Sumano

She who is beautiful as a jasmine

Throughout the Vedic period, gods were compared to nature. Is it an obsession of the people with nature, or have they identified that nature is the only one that can equal the mighty gods in power and beauty? Here, Bala is compared to the beautiful jasmine flower. Why is she compared to a jasmine flower? Is it the beauty that is comparable to Her or is it the fragrance so special that only Bala can be equated to it? Let us see...

Tracing the history, the flower finds mention in the Vedas, the oldest Hindu scripture. There are copious references to the jasmine in Tamil poems of the period from 300 B.C to 300 A.D. Similarly, the poems of Sangam literature describe how King Pari gifted his royal chariot for a jasmine creeper to rest because he simply could not see the creeper on the hard forest floor. There are several references to jasmine flower in ancient literature. Jasmine flowers are compared to Devi because it is said to be the queen

of flowers and it was Parvati who brought the seeds from heaven to plant it on earth. It is also said that jasmine is used to instill love in people. Kama the god of love, attached jasmine flowers to his arrows to make his victims fall in love. Krishna was worshipped with jasmine flowers in the month of Krittika. It is said that Krishna should be worshipped only with jasmine flowers during this month. It is alright even if he is not offered milk or honey or butter.

Jasmine flowers were used as a religious offering or altar decoration. It is the symbol of divine hope in Hinduism. The Balinese people plant jasmine in their public and private temples. Also, the Siwa-ratrikalpa, an ancient Javanese text, states that jasmine should be used as an offering to Ciwa, the native Javanese name for God. Jasmine is used as a symbol of love and romance. Sampaguita, a variety of jasmine, comes from the Filipino words "sumpa kita" which in English means, "I promise you." Couples once upon a time exchanged sampaguita necklaces just as today's couples give wedding rings.

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A traditional Asian belief is that jasmine penetrates the soul and opens up emotions. In ancient Egypt, Cleopatra used jasmine oil to seduce Anthony. It is still a favorite ingredient in perfumes all over the world. Jasmine was used even by Victorians. In Victorian Britain, jasmine was a fragrant symbol of amiability, cheerfulness, grace and elegance. While oth-

er cultures see jasmine as a symbol of sensuality and romance, Victorians used it as a complement to shyness and modesty. It was seen as a fragrant and cheering part of any flower arrangement and was valued because of the difficulty of growing it in a cold climate.

Jasmine, has flavour, aroma, medicinal values, and above all purity, so by comparing the flower to Bala the poet here is revealing the godly facts to a common reader — mainly purity. By comparing to a flower, the gentleness and purity is revealed. So if She represents purity then the devotees should also be equally pure in mind and spirit.

It is considered to be an apt and biological cure for jaundice and other venereal diseases. The flower buds help in treatment of ulcers, vesicles, boils, skin diseases and eye disorders, while the extracts from the leaf work against breast tumours. Drinking jasmine tea regularly helps in curing cancer. Its oil is very effective in calming and relaxing the mind. Throughout the Middle East and beyond, the odour molecules of jasmine, which blooms almost continuously in that part of the world, are significant and meaningful in varying ways. Jasmine sends inspirational olfactory messages that communicate hope, confidence, and optimism. It produces a euphoric response.

Algeria too acknowledged that, "Everyone grows jasmine." Jasmine water is kept in homes and sprinkled on guests to welcome them. Although Egypt is represented by lotus in World Sensorium, the species *jasminum sambac* has been indigenous to the country since ancient times and used in civilization's first perfumes. Today some of the best jasmine essential oil available in the world comes from Egypt.

Now that we have credited jasmine of its religious and biological importance, we have to know why this is being compared with Bala. Is it just by coincidence? Or is it a thought waiting to be discovered.

Jasmine, as we have seen, has flavour, aroma, medicinal values, and above all purity, so by comparing the flower to Bala the poet here is revealing the godly facts to a common reader — mainly purity. By comparing to a flower, the gentleness and purity is revealed. So if She represents purity then the devotees should also be equally pure in mind and spirit.

Purity is of two kinds - internal purity and external purity. Freedom from *raga-dvesha*, purity of intentions, purity of motives, and purity of *bhava* constitute internal purity. Purity of body, through bath, purity of clothes, purity of surroundings like the house and its neighbourhood, constitute external purity.

If you have purity of mind, you will remember Bala. If you always remember Bala, you will attain moksha. So what does it convey? If you want to enthrone Bala in your heart, you must eradicate all evil modifications in the mind.

External purity generates pure thoughts. Practice of external purity brings disgust for one's own body and the body of others also. You will soon give up *mamata*, mineness of body. Internal purity is more important than external purity. Internal purity makes the mind one-pointed, bestows serenity, cheerfulness, joy, strength, harmony, poise and happiness, instills love, patience and magnanimity. If you take pure food, you will have a pure mind. If you have purity of mind, you will remember Bala. If you always remember Bala, you will attain *moksha*.

So what does it convey? If you want to enthrone Bala in your heart, you must eradicate all evil modifications in the mind. What do you do when you expect to receive a very high important person in your house? You keep the house clean and remove all the dust and rubbish. You clean all the rooms and spread nice carpets. Similarly, you will have to remove all the dross of impurities from the mind if you want to have communion with Bala. It takes a long time to purify the heart.

Just as various kinds of dirt and dust are hidden underneath the carpet, so also, various kinds of impurities are hidden in the different corners of the mind. Mind is such a mischievous imp. It is the Mara that tempted Buddha. It is the Kama who disturbed Shiva when he was in deep meditation. It is the ghost of lust that spoiled the *tapas* of Visvamitra. You cannot wash the mind with soap and water to get rid of its impurities; but if you eradicate desire and attachment, the mind will be purified itself.

So the message it conveys is that purity is the path way to the kingdom of God. Without purity, no spiritual progress is possible. *Brahman* is purity. You will have to attain *brahman*, or know Her and become one with Her, only through purity. There is no other way. So in order to know Her, to be with Her, purify the intellect. Purify your heart. Purify your speech. Purify your body. Purify your senses. Purify your *prana*.

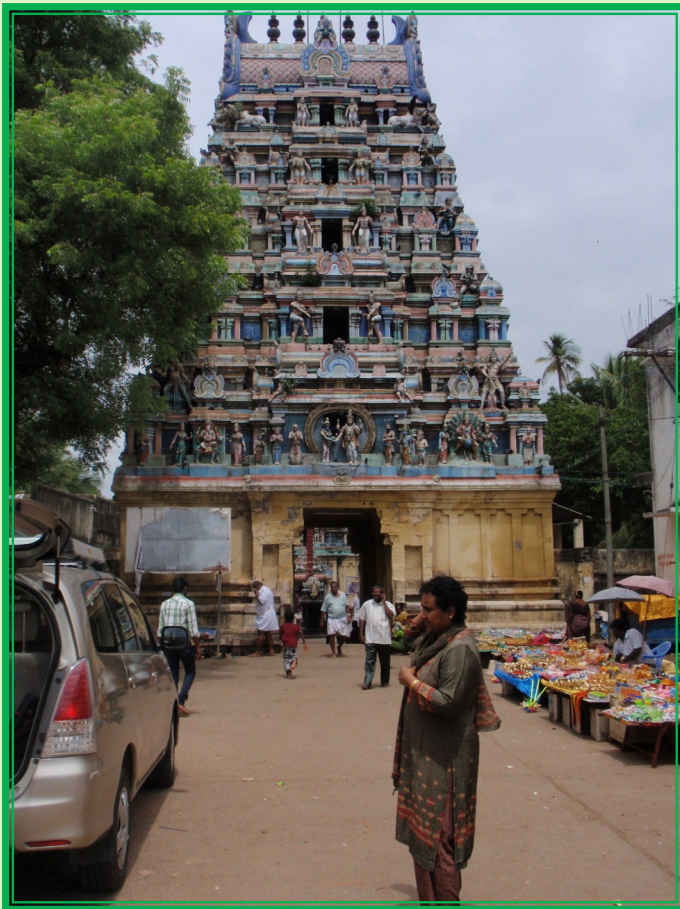


Temples of India - A journey through the heritage of time

- By Smt. Asha Manoharan

Thirumanancheri

Temples are the site for religious activities. It is also a place for reflection of our culture, tradition and faith. So what was I doing in such a place, what was I trying to rediscover? My culture, tradition or faith. My journey began with none of these things in mind. It was a journey to understand our forefathers, to understand the rich architecture in them, to understand the vibrant life surrounding them and mostly that of the legends associated with them.



Temples did not exist during the Vedic period (1500BC-500BC). The remains of the earliest temple structure was discovered in Surkh Kotal, a place in Afghanistan by a French archeologist in 1951. It was not dedicated to a god, but to the imperial cult of King Kanishka (127-151AD). The ritual idol worship became popular at the end of the Vedic age and this

might have given rise to temples as a place of worship.

During the week long trip, what I have understood is that temple history has to be comprehended in the light of the dynasties that ruled the country then. The growth of Hindu temples, its rise and fall go alongside the fate of various dynasties that reigned India during the period, majorly contributing and influencing the building of temples. Most of the temples in South India were built between the 6th and 18th century AD. So as we go along visiting these temples, I will give you an insight into their architecture and the royals who built these temples. I would be doing injustice if I do not talk about them.

My first temple was Thirumanancheri. Was this a random choice? Wait till you know the temples I have visited. This temple is located in Nagai district, 6 Kms from Kutthalam. From Kumbakonam: Take SH64 towards Mayuram, go 16 km to Mayil Aduthurai, 11 km to Kuthalam, take left 8 km to Thirumanancheri - 35 km approx. Another route from Kumbakonam: Take SH64 towards Mayuram, go 16 km to Aduthurai, take left 4 km to Suryanar kovil, 6 km to Kanchanur, 9 km to Thirumanancheri -



35 km approx.

Chennai to Thirumanancheri - 301 Km

Coimbatore to Thirumanancheri - 337 Km

Bangalore to Thirumanancheri - 430 Km

Hyderabad to Thirumanancheri - 867 Km

Hyderabad to Thirumanancheri - 1248 Km

Thirumanancheri is one among the popular temples of Lord Shiva, where He is devotedly worshiped as Kalyanasundareswarar and His consort, Mother Parvati as Kokilaambal. The Lord in Sanskrit is also called as Uthvaanganathar. In Tamil, they are addressed as 'Arul Vallal' and 'Kuyilinmenmozhiammai'. Thirumanancheri temple is where the divine marriage of Shiva and Parvati took place. 'Thirumanam' means marriage in Tamil language. To establish the formalities connected with the celebration of marriage and to please Umadevi, Lord Shiva followed strictly all the practices to the letter when He remarried Goddess Parvati. He had 'kangana' tied to his hand, he bathed in holy water, did 'paalikai sthaapanaa' at Kurumulaippadi, was received as the bridegroom and he tied the knot at Thirumanancheri.

The temple was built during the period of Kulothunga Chola, the stone inscriptions at the Mysore Maharani College say so. The idols of Girija Kalyanamoorthy at Nanjangudu of Karnataka State are believed to have been taken from here. According to the stone inscriptions at the temple, Sempian Madevi and Mallapa Naicker performed temple service here.

Legend has it that Parvati once expressed her desire to have the experience of an earthly wedding to Shiva. This story is believed to be in fulfillment of this wish expressed by her. A dispute in Mount Kailasha occurred over a game of chess. In accordance with the verdict of Shiva, Parvati recedes to an earthly life in the form of a cow and amidst her wandering reaches a place called Komal, where Lord Vishnu assumes a form of a cowherd

to take care of his sister. God Vishnu, upset over the events, wanted to reconcile the couple. He went to Shiva to justify his case. Shiva told Vishnu about Parvati's wish to experience a wedding on earth and assured Vishnu that all events would lead to that end. He also told Vishnu to take the cow to bathe in the Cauvery so she could regain her original form. He releases her from the clutch of the curse in a place called 'Thiruvaaduthurai' and Parvati sheds her assumed cow's form and takes Her normal form in 'Kuthaalam' in the sacrificial fire of Sage Bharata Muni. Parvati stays in his house as his daughter and sage Bharata Muni asks Shiva to marry his daughter. Shiva and Parvati then unite in marriage in Thirumanancheri. Shiva is also called as 'Sonavaararivaar' for keeping up His word.

This temple faces East. As soon as we enter the sanctum after leaving the *rajagopuram*, Lord Ganapathi has embodied himself. Then we are welcomed by the *thuvajasthambam*, *balipeedam*, Mahanandhi and *mandapam* (great hall). After leaving *kattagopuram varasihi* one can see Vinayagar who bestows his goodwill in front of Vinayagar *shobana mandapam*. Inside the sanctum Arulmighy Sri Uthvaganathar (Arulvallanathar) bestows his goodwill in a beautiful manner in *thuvaramandapam* with Thuvaram Balagar and Nandhi. In *niruththa mandapam* Shree Natarajar is seen in a dancing exposure. In front of Natarajar in the south *praharam* Lord Kalyanasundarar stands embodied with Goddess Ambigai smiling, facing east. Shree Kokilambal Ambigai is seen seated in a *suhasanam* posture as a bride in the wedding platform. It is a great feast to our eyes to see and worship the Goddess. She was dressed in green pattu saree waiting to be escorted to her bridegroom.

The inner *praharam* has four deities of Samayakkaravar's, who propagate salvate in this country in front of the Natarajar Sabai. In the south side of the Deva-

kushtam Pichadanar, Balaganapathi, Natarajar, Dakshinamoorthi are seen in a yoga posture. On the west side Lingothpavar, and in North side Brahman, RaghuBhagan and Sri Durga are seen in a separate sanctum. In the Kannaimoolai, Lord Vinayagar is seen, then on the western side, Karuvarai along with Upaya Nachiar Lord Mahavishnu, Lakshmi sannadhi is present. Idols of Bharatha Maharishi, Sembian Madevi, Mallappa Naicker are seen installed in the four directions of Karuvarai. Vanni, konrai and oomaththam that possess various medicinal properties are the 'sthalavrikshas' here at the temple.

'Saptasaharatheertham' is the 'theertham' of the temple. The seven seas that came here to attend the marriage of the Lord have stayed put here in the form of 'theerthams', the 'puranas' say. Thirug-nanasambandar and Thirunaavukkarasar, the two renowned Nayanmars have sung the praises of the 'sthala' in their verses.

The video supporting Smt. Asha Manoharan's temple visit article can also be accessed at:

<http://youtu.be/QAos-atAH9E>

Ganapathy Homam Festivity at 2012 Lalitha Homam





You, Me and our cup of Yoga

The 20 minute Yoga Cheat Sheet - By Gargi Parthasarathy

Yoga practice need not be for hours on end to feel its effects and benefits. Even 15 -20 minutes everyday can make you feel much better! Below, I have listed a sample practice plan for people who would love to fit in a 20 min yoga routine into their busy lives.

The 20 minute Yoga plan :

WARM UP <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neck rotation• Waist twist• Side bend• Arms rotation	Duration: 5 minutes
STANDING ASANAS (5-6 reps each) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Uttanasana</i>• <i>Uthitha Trikonasana or Virabhadrasana</i>	Duration: 5 minutes
SITTING ASANAS (5-6 reps each) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Paschimottanasana</i>• <i>Sethubandhasana</i>	Duration: 5 minutes
PRANAYAMA/SHAVASANA <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Nadi Shodana (Alternate nose breathing)</i>	Duration: 5 minutes

Arms rotation:

Rotate both the arms clockwise and then anticlockwise for around 30 counts each time. Make sure you do not get carried away with this one and do it too vigorously. We just want to warm up and not harm the shoulders. Try to do it at a comfortable pace.

Waist twist:

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Place your hands on your waist and turn the upper torso to the right and left twisting the waist. Exhale every time you twist. Again, as with the previous warm up, start slow if you feel very stiff in the beginning and then you can increase to a comfortable pace.

Side bend:

Adopt the same pose as the above warm up and bend from side to side.

Neck rotation:

Move your neck up and down, then sideways.

Uttanasana

One rep: Inhale as you come up and exhale as you fold down. Stay down for a count of 5.

NOTE : If you adopt this practice at the beginning of the day, I would recommend you to do *pranayama* instead of *Shavasana*. But if its been a long day, then you could do *Shavasana* for a complete 5 minutes to wind down. The *asanas* listed have been covered in previous articles.

Did you know...?

By Smt. Asha Manoharan

Water in Hinduism

The worldwide practice of Hinduism encompasses a wide variety of beliefs. Hindus believed in purification of body as well as the soul. This aspiration lends itself to a reverence for water as well as the integration of water into most Hindu rituals, as it is believed that water has spiritually cleansing powers. Holy places are usually located on the banks of rivers, coasts, seashores and mountains. Sites of convergence between land and two, or even better three, rivers, carry special significance and are especially sacred.

Sacred rivers are thought to be a great equalizer. For example, in the Ganges, the pure are thought to be made even more pure, and the impure have their pollution removed if only temporarily. In these sacred waters, the distinctions imposed by castes are alleviated, as all sins fall away. Every spring, the Ganges River swells with water as snow melts in the Himalayas. The water brings life as trees and flowers bloom and crops grow. This cycle of life is seen as a metaphor for Hinduism. Water represents the "non-manifested substratum from which all manifestations derive" and is considered by Hindus to be a purifier, life-giver, and destroyer of evil.

Milk and water are symbols of fertility, absence of which can cause barrenness, sterility leading to death. Temple tanks are an essential part of every large Hindu temple. Every village/town/city has a temple with a sizable water tank. Conventional beliefs hold that the water of a temple tank is holy and has cleansing properties. It is an unwritten rule to take a dip in the temple tank before offering prayers to the presiding deities, thereby purifying oneself. In actuality, the tanks serve as a useful reservoir to help communities tide over water scarcity. Water in India is largely dependent on the monsoons. In case

the rains fail, people can look to these temple tanks to fulfill basic water needs. These days, the tanks are mostly found in a state of neglect.

Historical Hindu references to water:

The Matsya Avatara of Lord Vishnu is said to have appeared to King Manu (whose original name was Satyavrata, the then King of Dravida) while he washed his hands in a river. This river was supposed to have been flowing down the Malaya Hills in his land of Dravida. According to the Matsya Purana, his ship was supposed to have been perched after the deluge on the top of the Malaya Mountain. A little fish asked the king to save it and, upon his doing so, kept growing bigger and bigger. It also informed the King of a huge flood which would occur soon. The King built a huge boat, which housed his family, 9 types of seeds, and animals to repopulate the earth after the deluge occurred and the oceans and seas receded.

Water images in early Indian art show illustrations of Ganga on a crocodile and Yamuna on a tortoise flanking the doorways of early temples. In the Varaha cave at Udayagiri, of the 4th century A.D., the two goddesses meet in a wall of water, recreating Prayaga (ancient name for Allahabad). The Pallavas at Mamallapuram, carved the story of the descent of the Ganga on an enormous rock. Later, Adi Shesha, the divine snake who forms the couch of Narayana, represented water.

Etymology of the word Hindu also denotes water... Hind - is the Persian name for the Indus River, first encountered in the Old Persian word Hindu corresponding to Vedic Sanskrit Sindhu, the Indus River. The Rig Veda mentions the land of the Indo-Aryans as Sapta Sindhu (the land of the seven rivers in northwestern South Asia, one of them being the Indus).

Water in Hindu ritual:

Water is very important for all the rituals in Hinduism. For example, water is essential as a cleaning agent, cleaning the vessels used for *pooja* (rituals), and for *abhisheka* or bathing of deities. Several *dravya* or nutrients are used for the purpose of bathing the deities, and after use of each *dravya*, water is used for cleansing the deity. Water that is offered to the deity, and the water collected after bathing the deities are considered very sacred. This water is offered as "*theertha*" or blessed offering to the devotees.

Poorna kumba literally means a full pitcher ("*poorna*" is full and "*kumbha*" is pitcher). The *Poorna kumbha* is a pitcher full of water with fresh leaves preferably of mango tree and a coconut placed on the top. *Poorna kumbha* is an object symbolizing God and it is regularly used during different religious rites. The water in the jar is said to be divine essence.

Many of the *poojas* in Hinduism start with keeping a *kalasa* which is a brass, silver or gold pot filled with water adorned with a coconut amidst mango or other sacred leaves. *Kalasa* symbolizes the universe and becomes an integral part of the Mandalic-liturgy as it still forms an indispensable element of certain *poojas* in Hinduism. The pot is the first mandala into which the deities descend and raise themselves.

One of the religious rituals is *tarpana*, which means to please or to gratify. Specifically, *tarpana* is the act of pouring water through the hands with the use of sacred grass as a symbolic gesture of recognition, thanking and pleasing Gods, sages, and fathers. During all purification rites water is sprinkled on the objects which are to be purified. Water used to be sprinkled on any offerings to the deities. Before starting a meal Hindus sprinkle water around the leaf or plate in which the meal is traditionally eaten.

In times past, a King was sprinkled with water in order to purify him during his coronation. This was believed to ensure an auspicious beginning to his reign.

There is also an important ritual called *Sandhyopasana* or *Sandhyavandanam* which is a combination of meditation and concentration. *Sandhya* is an obligatory duty to be performed daily for self-purification and self improvement. Regular *sandhya* cuts the chain of old *samskaras* and changes everybody's old situation entirely. It brings purity, *atma-bhava*, devotion and sincerity. The important features of this ceremony are: *achamana* or sipping of water with recitation of *mantras*, *marjana* or sprinkling of water on the body which purifies the mind and the body, *aghamarshana* or expiation for the sins of many births, and *surya arghya* or ablutions of water to the Sun-god (the other two non water-based elements of the ceremony are: *pranayama*, or control of breath which steadies the wandering mind, and silent recitation of *Gayatri*; and *upasthana*, or religious obeisance).

The first part of *arghya* consists of hymns addressed to water and its benefits. The sprinkling of water on the face and the head and the touching of the different organs (the mouth, nose, eyes, ears, chest, shoulders, head, etc.) with wet fingers, are meant to purify those parts of the body and invoke the respective presiding deities on them. They also stimulate the nerve-centres and wake up the dormant powers of the body. The *arghya* drives away the demons who obstruct the path of the rising sun. Esoterically, lust, anger and greed are the demons who obstruct the intellect from rising up (the intellect is the sun). *Achamana* is the sipping of water three times, while repeating the names of the Lord. One becomes pure by doing *achamana* after he answers calls of nature, after walking in the streets, just before taking food and after food, and after a bath.

Jalanjali is a handful of water as an offering to the manes, gods, etc. A rite observed before an idol is installed is *Jaladhivaasam* (submersion in water) and *Jalasthanam* is another rite. Pouring water on the head in purificatory ceremony is *Jalaabhishekam*. A religious austerity to be observed in water is called *Jalavaasam*. It is also abiding in water. One who lives by drinking water alone is *Jalaasi*. A religious vow or practice in which a devotee lives by drinking water alone for one month is known as *Jalakricchram*. Chanting of mantras standing in water is *Jalajapam*. A kind of penance observed by standing under a continuous downpour of water is *Jaladhaara*. *Neernila* is chanting of hymns while standing in water.

A bath performed in the holy water for the achievement of some desire is called *Kaamyasnanam*. *Prokshana* is sprinkling water over one's body to purify, when a bath is not possible. This is for internal as well as external purity. Immediately after childbirth, a close relative of the child pours a few drops of water on the body of the child using his right hand, which is called *Nir talikkuka*. It is said that the child will get the character of this person. As such, a close relative with good character does the ritual.

Health and water:

The Vedic declaration says that water offered to Sun in the evening converts the drops of water to stones that cause death to the demons. For humans, demons are like all sicknesses like typhoid TB, pneumonia etc. When a devotee takes water in his hands while standing in front of or facing the sun and drops water on the ground, the rising direct Sun's rays fall from the head to feet of the devotee in a uniform flow. This way water heated by Sun's rays and its colors penetrates every part of the body. This is the reason why the Vedas direct the devotee to offer water when the Sun is about to set.

To alleviate fevers, sprinkling holy or consecrated water on the sick person, chanting mantras is *Udakashanti*. While the water being sprinkled muttering a curse can affect a metamorphosis, the Hindu saints were able to curse or bless using this 'subhodakam'. Water Therapy, both external and internal, has been practised for centuries to heal the sick. *Usha Kaala Chikitsa* is Sanskrit for water therapy. According to this ancient system, 1.5 litres of water should be consumed each morning on an empty stomach, as well as throughout the day. Water Therapy is considered to be a material way of taking an "internal bath". Water plays a significant role in death as well. Many funeral grounds used to be located near the rivers in India. After cremation, the mourners bathe in the river before returning to their homes. After the third day, the ashes are collected, and on the tenth day these are cast into the holy river.

Inner Whispers...

By Smt. Asha Manoharan

Recently a teenager asked me this question: Is there a heaven? If so where is this? Is it up there in the sky? This is the normal question which pops up in every body's mind but we often keep quiet because of the fear of being laughed at. So for the benefit of every child within us let me answer this question.

According to the Hindu Puranas, there are fourteen worlds in the universe - the seven upper and the seven lower. The seven upper worlds are *Bhuh*, *Bhuvah*, *Swah*, *Mahah*, *Janah*, *Tapah*, and *Satyam*; and the seven nether worlds are *Atala*, *Vitala*, *Sutala*, *Rasatala*, *Talatala*, *Mahatala*, and *Patala*. The region known as *Bhuh* is the earth where we dwell, while *Swah* is the celestial world to which people retire after death to enjoy the reward of their righteous actions on earth. *Bhuvah* is the region between the two. *Janah*, *Tapah*, and *Satyam* constitute *Brahmaloka*, or the highest heaven, where fortunate souls retire after death and enjoy spiritual communion with the personal God, and at the end of the cycle attain liberation, though a few return to earth again. The world of *Mahah* is located between *Brahmaloka* and *Bhuh*, *Bhuvah*, and *Swah*. *Patala*, the lowest of the seven nether worlds, is the realm where wicked souls sojourn after death and reap the results of their unrighteous actions on earth.

Fourth dimensional awareness, has the basic qualities of timelessness, spacelessness and energy. In the fourth dimension, there is consciousness of eternity, where past and future simultaneously co-exist.

Let us look at it more closely. The worlds mentioned here are partly existent and we can relate to them, the *Janah*, *Tapah* and *Satyam* are worlds belonging to the *Brahmaloka*. *Brahmaloka* which we otherwise coin as heaven, is existing and it exists between the two worlds *Bhuv* and *Bhuvah*. *Brahmaloka* is the fourth dimension in space. For example if we take the celestial world as a cube, the one dimensional analog of a cube is an interval (moving a distance say L). The second dimensional analog of a cube is a square (having length (L) and breadth (L)). The third

dimensional is the cube (having length, breadth and height (L^3)). To form a tesseract, we take a cube and drag it to a distance in the fourth dimension (line drawn between two cubes). The tesseract has a volume of L^4 (fourth dimensional cube). It is bounded by faces on 8 sides. The faces are cubes of volume L^3 . We know there are 8 of them since its four dimensional axes must be capped on either end by faces--two cubical faces per axis. So when one views the *Brahmaloka* in the fourth dimensional perspective then it makes sense why it is not so easily accessible and why heaven is always shown pointed upwards and not downwards, because it exists in the celestial world and man has not found means to see it and travel towards it, that is the reason it still remains in our religious texts and has not arrived into our science texts. So to view the *Brahmaloka* you shouldn't be looking up but looking out to see it. We can travel into the fourth dimension with our soul. Physical awareness is three-dimensional, soul awareness is of the fourth dimension. Three-dimensional awareness has the basic qualities, time, space and matter. These qualities creates the experiences of separation, death and mass. Fourth dimensional awareness, on the other hand, has the basic qualities of timelessness, spacelessness and energy. These qualities create the experiences of unity, being and flow. In the fourth dimension, there is consciousness of eternity, where past and future simultaneously co-exist. There is consciousness of omnipresence, in which everywhere is located right here. In other words, the here and now is "Home Central" of the fourth dimension. There is a sense in the here and now of a permanent sense of being. That being is not of things, but of energy. As Barrett puts it, "In the fourth dimension of consciousness there is only an eternal moment that we call now and everything exists in energy forms."

Do you have any questions which needs answers, then send in your questions to asha.raji@gmail.com.

Ambal's Keerthanai

Manasil vanda enn ambikai neeye...

Composition: Smt. Asha Manoharan

Sung by: Smt. Ambika Arvindd

Ragam: Hindolam

Talam: Adi

The lilting melody of this keerthanai, expresses the devotee's unconditional bhakti and mahavishwasam, as the devotee praises Goddess Ambika, who resides in every thought and action, who is the savior and protector, and beckons to Her to come and give a darshan, knowing fully well that She will most certainly appear!

Pallavi

Manasil vanda enn ambikai neeye
unnai allal oru thunaiyum yavaro

Anupallavi

Indru naan unnai padavum vanden
enn ragamum neeye thalamum neeye

Charanam

Rajadhi rajarum potrum deyvi neeye, padalum neeye porulum neeye
koopitta kuralukku varubhavalum neeye, odi vandennai kaapavalum neeye
oodi vandennai aadharipaye.



Bala Prastha

A STORY TO PONDER...

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared; he sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no farther. Then the man decided to help the butterfly. So he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was, able to fly.

What this man in his kindness and haste did not understand, was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were nature's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If nature allowed us to go through our life without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. And we could never fly!



Answers to August crossword

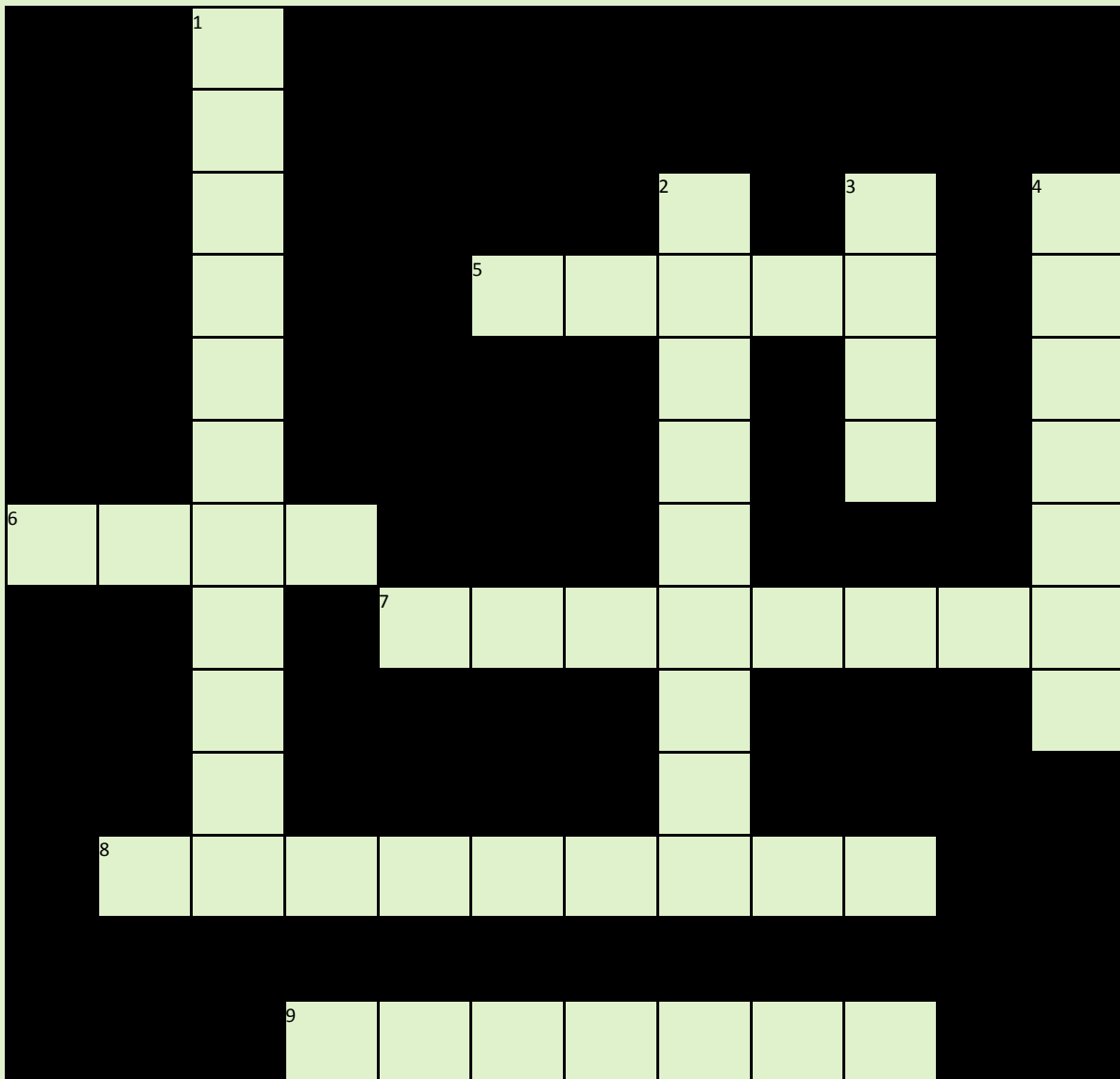
Across:

2. Indra
5. Kumbhakarna
8. Andal
11. Bala
12. Narasimha
14. Hanuman
15. Ganesha

Down:

1. Mahabali
3. Narada
4. Surpadman
6. Kartikeyan
7. Saraswati
9. Janaka
10. Vaikunta
13. Varuna

CROSSWORD PUZZLE - Based on the exemplary characters from our rich Indian culture, who have shown their *bhakti* or unconditional devotion in many ways - here are a few popular versions.



Across

Down

- 5. Devotion to a friend
- 6. Devotion to a husband
- 7. Devotion to a Guru
- 8. Devotion to a brother
- 9. Devotion to a friend/God

- 1. Devotion to dharma/duty
- 2. Pure devotion to God
- 3. Devotion to a father
- 4. Devotion to duty/God

We are very thankful to...

Archana Contribution

Roopa and Varadarajan
Shashikala and Venkatesh
Mythili and Sundararajan

Pooja items for Bala's House

Jayalakshmi Ananthkrishnan
Sowmya Ganesh
Gowri Shekar
Radhika Venkat
Shashikala Venkatesan
Thothadri
Bhuvana Krishnaswamy
Lalitha Raghuraman
Purnima Prasad
Indumathi Sundar
Usha
Muralidharan family

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Uma & Dhinakaran

Dolai Utsavam Sponsors

Viswanathan family (Malur)

Sangam Annadanam Initiative

Balambika Divya Sangam has been performing Annadanam to children at Modern English School, Malur, for the past several months. This noble initiative that originally seeded out of goodwill and benevolence, has been going on very successfully, thanks to the generous support of our many patrons and sponsors. We would like to share with you a few pictures of the Annadanam event at Malur.



Dolai Utsavam Celebration - Chennai







A Balambika Divya Sangam presentation

“Kumara Sambhava”

by

Puthali Kalaranga

Oct 1st, 2012

6.30 pm-8.30 pm

Venue:

**JSS Maha Vidya Peetha
Shivarathreeswara Centre
1st main , 8th block
Jayanagar
Bengaluru- 560082**



For Ticket details contact:

**Sharanya Vignesh : 9663422335
Priya Kasturi : 8050511146**

