

HINDU NEWS

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Season's Greetings

We wish all our devotees and well-wishers
A Very Happy New Year and Happy Pongal.

இனிய 2016 புத்தாண்டு வாழ்த்துக்கள் மற்றும்
பொங்கல் நல்வாழ்த்துக்கள்.



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MOVING FORWARD IN 2016

I hope all of you had a great holiday season. I am sure that, many positive things will happen within the Hindu community in 2016. Let's start with the Thaipusam festival, which will be held on 24 January 2016.

We are glad that religious music is being introduced at various points along the Thaipusam procession route. With the introduction of a few LIVE music points and increase in the number of transmission music points, our devotees, especially our kavadi bearers, are bound to have a more vibrant devotional experience this year. It is our responsibility as a community to enjoy this new experience whilst ensuring that it is orderly. HEB has made several administrative changes to the way Thaipusams were managed in the past and we are positive that all the enhancements would result in greater participation amongst Hindu devotees.

As HEB looks to the year ahead, it intends to focus on making an impact in a few key areas with the Hindu community. Priority will be given to bringing temples closer to the people to better serve their spiritual, social, educational and cultural needs.

At the Board, we will strive to keep our temples financially self-sufficient to offer the Hindu community more than just religious services. We hope to roll out our online booking service for religious services and temple facilities. This would include automation of all temple transactions. Our temples will each have an interactive online portal listing its services as well as programs with detailed explanations to associated religious rites and rituals. Everyone would be able to access and book our temple services and facilities in the comfort of their home or office.

In 2016, HEB will continue offering disadvantaged families much needed educational bursaries, study grants, pre-school subsidies and even free monthly food rations. In the coming year, HEB will be expanding its reach to make free health screening and referrals to hospitals more accessible by organising more health fairs.

In today's context it is important for HEB to work with other privately managed Hindu temples as well as Hindu institutions to collectively uplift the Hindu community. HEB will offer both resources and expertise, where possible, to these organisations to reach out to the community.

For HEB run temples to remain relevant in a constantly evolving society like Singapore, it is important to promote moral and religious education, amongst the young. With such education comes racial/religious understanding – of being able to live cohesively with people of other races and religions.

With a number of new and ongoing initiatives to look forward to this year, I am sure that the year will be interesting for our community. Best wishes to one and all for 2016!

R Jayachandran
Chairman
Hindu Endowments Board

2016ம் ஆண்டில் வாரியம்

அன்புடையீர்,

2016ம் ஆண்டில் பல சவால்களை நிகழ்த்தி இந்து அறக்கட்டளை வாரியம் தயாரிகியுள்ளது. பக்தர்களாகிய உங்களின் முழு ஆதரவை எதிர்ப்பார்க்கின்றது.

முதலில் தைப்பூசத் திருவிழா 2016. இந்த ஆண்டு தைப்பூச விழா பாதையில் பக்தி இசை ஒரு சில இடங்களில் அனுமதிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது என்பது நாம் அறிவோம். இந்த நடவடிக்கை விழாவின் பக்திப் பரவசத்தை மேலும் அதிகரிக்கும். இந்த நல்ல அனுபவத்தைக் கட்டிக்காப்பது நாம் அனைவரின் பொறுப்பாகும்.

இந்த ஆண்டில் வாரியத்தின் பல திட்டங்களில் நமது கோயில்களின் சேவைகளை மேலும் மேம்படுத்துவதில் நான்கு ஆலயங்களில் கணினி மூலம் பக்தர்களுக்குச் சேவைகளை வழங்குவது ஒரு முக்கிய ஏற்பாடு.

2016ல் வசதி குறைந்த குடும்பங்களுக்கு மேலும் பல வழிகளில் உதவி செய்வது வாரியத்தின் மற்றும் ஒரு குறிக்கோளாகும். நமது சமுதாயத்தினரின் சுகாதாரமும் ஒரு முக்கிய அம்சம். மேலும் பல சுகாதார விழாக்களை ஏற்பாடு செய்து இலவச சுகாதார பரிசோதனைகளுக்குத் திட்டமிட்டுள்ளோம்.

நமது இந்து சமுதாயத்தை மேம்படுத்த, வாரியம் எல்லா ஆலயங்களுடன் இணைந்து செயல்படுவது மிகவும் முக்கியமாகும். இவ்வாறு செய்வதால் பல குடும்பங்களை நாடி அவர்களுக்குத் தேவையான உதவிகளை நல்குவதற்கு வாரியம் சக கோயில்களுடன் நெருக்கமாக பணிபுரியும்.

உங்கள் அனைவருக்கும் வாரியத்தின் மங்கள புத்தாண்டு வாழ்த்துக்கள்.

ர. ஜெயச்சந்திரன்
தலைவர்,

இந்து அறக்கட்டளை வாரியம்

NEW INITIATIVES FOR THAIPUSAM



For the Thaipusam Festival in 2016, more music will be available along the procession route.

a) LIVE Music Points (8.00am to 10.30pm)

The 3 LIVE music points are

- Hastings Road;
- Short Street; and
- Bras Basah Road Field.

At the LIVE music points, Temple musicians will be stationed on a stage to play for kavadi bearers walking the procession.

Urumi melam musicians who wish to play at one of the designated LIVE music points can register with Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple (SSPT). Please send your contact details to musicians@thaipusam.sg or call 9382 9176.

A representative from SSPT will contact your urumi group to allocate the timing to play at the LIVE music point. ONLY those urumi groups who register with SSPT will be allowed to play on stage at the LIVE music point on Thaipusam day. Urumi melam groups should register early as the slots will fill up fast. Musicians should not walk and play along the procession route.

b) Transmission Music Points (8.00am to 10.30pm)

The 7 transmission music points playing Kavadi Sindhu are

- Outside Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple (SSPT);
- Baboo Lane;
- Cuff Road;
- Princep Street;
- Dhoby Ghaut Green;
- Outside Sri Thendayuthapani Temple (STT); and
- Head shaving Area Sri Thendayuthapani Temple (STT).

Kavadi bearers are requested to move through the transmission music points and LIVE music points at a steady pace. Any delays will hold up the rest of the procession and inconvenience others.

With music provided by the organisers along the procession route, kavadi bearers need not engage and pay for additional music.

c) Music Inside the Temple

Temple musicians will be stationed at Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple (SSPT) to play for kavadi bearers as they prepare their kavadis. Kavadi bearers may approach the SSPT office to request for this free service (subject to availability). Urumi melam groups wishing to offer their service to kavadi bearers can register with SSPT.

Kavadi bearers who want urumi melam music at SSPT, may approach the registered urumi melam groups stationed within SSPT (based on availability). Kavadi bearers may engage any of the registered urumi melam groups at a fee to play for them within the temple.

Improvements To The Procession Route

- The last kavadi is allowed to leave Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple (SSPT) at 7.00pm on Thaipusam day.
- There is a separate lane for women, children and families along Clemenceau Avenue leading to Sri Thendayuthapani Temple.
- There are resting/ overtaking bays along the procession route.

Reduction In Participation Fee

- There is a reduction in fee for kavadi participation. All deposits have been removed.
- There is an extension in the duration to purchase participation tickets for various Thaipusam vows. Participation tickets for Paal Kudam, Paal Kavadi, Thottil Kavadi, Ratha Kavadi and Alagu Kavadi are available at both Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple and Sri Thendayuthapani Temple. ■

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PREPARING FOR THE WALK OF FAITH

During Thaipusam, there are many types of offerings to Lord Murugan. A special offering is the carrying of kavadi and there is a Puranic legend behind this practice.

The simplest kavadi consists of a short wooden pole surmounted by a wooden arch. Pictures or statues of Lord Murugan or other deities are fixed onto the arch. The kavadi is decorated with peacock feathers and a small pot of milk is attached to each end of the pole.



A devotee carrying a simple kavadi

There are more elaborate kavadis that devotees carry. The alagu and ratha kavadi are common forms of kavadi carried by devotees during Thaipusam. Kavadis are affixed on a bearer's body by long sharpened rods or by chains and small hooks. A kavadi bearer not only carries a gift for God but the whole kavadi is seen as a shrine for God Himself.



Ratha (chariot) kavadi

Devotees who intend to carry kavadis are customarily required to observe strict physical and mental discipline. Purification of the body is a necessity. This includes taking just simple vegetarian meals and observing celibacy. Piercing the skin, tongue or cheeks is also common. This prevents the devotees from speaking and gives them great powers of endurance.

Hindu News spoke to two kavadi bearers on their preparations for their walk of faith – the reasons for carrying the kavadi, how they observe their fast, the family support they receive and what goes through their minds on the day of Thaipusam.

Mr Prethev Raj, 43, has been carrying kavadi for the last 13 years. Initially, he started carrying the kavadi out of curiosity but after doing so for the first time, he realised how fulfilling it was.

"It is a matter of mind over body. Deep concentration on the All Mighty makes you overcome any pain or suffering, which in turn gives you inner strength. It makes you a stronger person."

Fasting, doing meditation and listening to devotional hymns helps to prepare Mr Raj physically, mentally and spiritually. "I go on a strict vegetarian diet for 14 days and visit the Temple. My family is very supportive and joins me in being vegetarian out of their own will. They have understood over the years as to what it takes for the preparation and help accordingly. And because I carry the kavadi together with my cousin, it's like a family gathering for a good cause."

When asked how he prepares his kavadi, Mr Raj said, "I start fixing my kavadi early and prefer to do it alone as that's when I connect with the kavadi itself. The feeling grows more as the days get closer and the kavadi is almost completely assembled. Personally, I do not use my religious vows as reasons to abstain from work and carry out my normal duties as per normal although I have a very good support at work. I believe that this is the best way of respecting and displaying the best of Hinduism."

Describing his emotions and thoughts on the day of Thaipusam, Mr Raj said, "I carry the 'arigandam' kavadi. Getting the right people to do the piercing is very important too. The atmosphere of divine music and songs keep you motivated and add to inner strength. Support from family and friends during the journey is equally important to keep you going. Words cannot describe the feeling when I am finally standing before the All Mighty. The satisfaction you get is awesome and makes you look forward to the next time when you are given the opportunity to carry the kavadi again."



Getting the right person to do the piercing is very important says Mr Raj. (Photo credit: Prethev Raj)

Another kavadi bearer, Mr Saravanan s/o Krisnan, 36, has been participating in Thaipusam since he was 12 years old. "I made a vow to Lord Murugan, who is my 'kuladeivam', that I will take the chariot kavadi as long as I physically can," he said.

"For a week before Thaipusam, I have one meal a day and consume only fruits at night. I sleep on the floor as I believe that this is one of the factors that helps to condition the body too. I pray to Lord Murugan to give me strength to fulfil my vow. Fasting and prayer make me feel light and calm my mind. My family members prepare vegetarian meals and we also sing bhajans together."

"I start preparing and decorating my ratha kavadi weeks before Thaipusam. I enjoy every moment of it. On the day of Thaipusam, my uncle helps with the piercings as he is very experienced. With family and friends singing the bhajans,

I hardly realise that the piercings have been done. As I take the ratha kavadi early in the morning, the weather is usually pleasant. This makes the journey much easier. Finally, when the milk offered is poured over Lord Murugan's Vel, I feel a great sense of satisfaction and peace," added Mr Saravanan. ■



Mr Saravanan gets his experienced uncle to do the piercing (Photo credit: Saravanan Krisnan)



Embarking on his journey of faith (Photo credit: Prethev Raj)

MCCY APPRECIATION DINNER 2015

On 19 November 2015, the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) held its Appreciation Dinner 2015 with the aim of honouring its stakeholders from various organisations who are actively engaged in the arts, heritage, sports, community and youth sectors over the years. Members from the Hindu Endowments Board (HEB) and Hindu Advisory Board (HAB) received the Friends of MCCY Award 2015 from Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth.

Hindu News congratulates Mr R Jayachandran (Chairman, HEB), Mr Rajan Krishnan (Chairman, HAB) and Mr N Prushuathamun (Vice Chairman, HAB) on the Friends of MCCY Award 2015.

Speaking of his aspirations, Mr Jayachandran said, "My vision is for Hindu institutions and temples to remain relevant in a constantly changing society like Singapore. To achieve this, I am encouraging moral and religious education especially amongst the young. With education comes understanding."

Sharing his experiences, Mr N Prushuathamun said that his involvement over the years has allowed him to gain insights into the community issues and to help find solutions for the challenges that Singapore faces as a multi-racial and multi-religious society. "It has been a richly rewarding experience and I am grateful for the opportunity to work on matters that address the needs of the Hindu community, and to build ties and rapport with other communities," he added. ■



Mr R Jayachandran receiving the Friend of MCCY Award from Minister Grace Fu.



HAB Chairman, Mr Rajan Krishnan receiving his award.



Mr N Prushuathamun receiving his award. (Photo credits: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth)

TIMELESS MESSAGE FROM BHAGAVAD GITA

The International Gita Forum, an integral part of Gita Jayanti celebrations, was held on 24 October 2015 at PGP Hall.

Prof. S. Jayakumar, former Deputy Prime Minister who inaugurated the Forum, was happy to see several Indian organisations working together for the betterment of the community. He also touched upon a few verses of Gita to bring out the relevance to the human behaviour even now.

Swami Vinayakanandaji spoke on the topic of "The Universal Concept of God - The Uniting Force". He elaborated on how God could be realised while living in a human body since God resides in every one. Swamiji explained 'Naadha Bindu Kala' akin to the sleeping of humans, the pure consciousness in association with Maya (delusion), manifests into this wonderful creation but it must be understood to be transient in nature. His analogy of mobile phones and SIM cards as body and Atma struck a chord with the audience in explaining day-to-day issues in a simple manner.

Another speaker, Mr Subhanu Saxena, spoke on the subject of 'Gita for Leaders and Business Life'. He showed how Krishna's advices to Arjuna are relevant for the corporate world also. He said a Corporate must have purpose beyond profit, any work must be enjoyed in the process of it and not for the result of it. The principle of surrender to God or 'Sharanagathi' can be adopted for salary negotiations too, he added, leaving it to the other side to decide in good faith.

Dr N Varaprasad (President, Hindu Centre) chaired the Open Forum session. Some 300 persons attended the Forum.

In the afternoon, an art competition for children was held in three categories of age. The response was overwhelming with about 140 registrants. The theme for competition was "Govardhana Giridhari or Gopalakrishna". Prizes were given away to first three winners in each category along with a few more consolation prizes. The judges were amazed at the quality of the drawing and commended the participants. ■



Swami Vinayakanandaji (extreme left) and Mr Subhanu Saxena (extreme right) during the Q&A session



Children's art competition

MY JOURNEY WITH AYYAPPAN

By Ravi Suppiah



Lord Ayyappan

"Many are the names of God, and infinite the forms that lead us to know Him. In whatsoever name or form you desire to call Him, in that very form and name you will see Him."

— Sri Ramakrishna

Throughout my years of praying to Bhagavan, I have come to realise that this quote by Sri Ramakrishna summarises the true essence of what Lord Ayyappan's worship is all about.

Many years ago, before wearing the 'Ayyappan Malai' for the very first time, I had no idea who Lord Ayyappan was and had never sincerely prayed to him. The first thing I did was to go to the internet to source for information, and that's when I started to understand the legend behind Lord Ayyappa and Sabari Malai. It was also through these sites that I got to understand the strictness of the 'one mandalam fasting period' and its importance in preparing our mind and body for the yatra (pilgrimage).

I started on this journey with a group of friends and at that time we didn't have anyone to guide us. The practices that we developed were based on our own reasoning and advice from other devotees who had been on this journey before, and therefore, had more experience.

As a first timer, everything was new to me, and I very much followed what the other devotees in the group were doing. At that time, I felt that the whole process was more religious instead of spiritual. With Lord Ayyappan's grace, I had a good dharisanam at the Sannidhanam (main sanctum).

From my second year onwards, my connection with Lord Ayyappan grew much stronger and I was able to feel my prayers become a lot more spiritual. I started to question the rituals that we were following and decided to adopt my own approach to Bhagavan's worship. As I did my daily prayers for him each day, my love for Him started to grow, and the yearning to see him was beyond words.

When we climbed His 18 Steps, we were allowed to go straight to the front to see him, and they were performing the Ashtabhishegam for Bhagavan. That wonderful memory is firmly etched in my mind and it gives me goose-bumps, even when I think of it now.

It was in my Manikandan year that Bhagavan blessed us to have Raja Guruswamy as our Guru. Under his guidance and leadership, we learnt so much about Bhagavan and His worship.

His way of Lord Ayyappan's worship was so simple – love, love, love. He taught us that all we had to do was to love Bhagavan like how a mother loves her child; simple and pure. He taught us that in order for Bhagavan to come into our lives, we first had to empty our hearts from ego, hatred and jealousy. When your heart is filled with such negativity, there can be no space for Bhagavan to enter. When we clear our hearts and minds, we create space for Him to come into our lives, and be a part of us.

It was through our Guruswamy's guidance that we also learnt how to conduct the poojas at home. He taught us everything that we needed to know and was personally present for all our poojas at home to pray for Bhagavan to come to our homes and bless all the devotees. He says that Bhagavan will only come if everyone prays together with one-heart and one-mind. 'Oru-Manathodu Kootu Prathanai' is the key.

It was with our Guruswamy that we went for the Periya Pathai and Makara Jyothi for the first time. The Periya Pathai was a life-changing experience. You see so many people, from the very young to the very old, walking the path. There are also many devotees with physical challenges that take the Periya Pathai every year to see Lord Ayyappan. When you witness all these miracles, you realise that it is a journey that can only be completed with Bhagavan's blessings; nothing else will get you through.

In the few years that I have been to Sabari Malai, I have had the blessing to attend Lord Ayyappan poojas conducted by many different groups under various Guruswamys. In all the prayers, I observed that every group does the prayers in their own unique way depending on how their Guruswamy taught them. However, the most important thing is that the presence of Bhagavan could be felt in each and every prayer regardless of the approach. That is the beauty of Ayyappan worship.

Those who have been to Sabari Malai during the season-time, would have seen the massive crowds there. Hundreds and thousands of Swamys don't have the resources to stay comfortably in a room. They will find any available open space to rest and sleep in the night.

Our Guruswamy will always tell us that if Bhagavan has blessed us to be in a position to do good deeds and help others that is what we should do. We served annadhanam to many devotees when we went on our Yatra together and we have been carrying on with that tradition ever since. At the start of this year's Yatra, we started to place a hundial at every house pooja to collect contributions for the annadhanam at Sabari Malai. We encouraged all those attending the pooja to donate what they could, so that we could do our part by providing annadhanam for the Swamys at Sabarimalai.

With the money that was raised, we provided annadhanam

at Pamba and at Sannidhanam throughout the entire time that we were there. We were also able to provide thannidhanam to the Swamy's at different points along the Periya Paathai. We chose particular points where we knew that many Swamy's would be extremely tired, and all they needed to carry on was a glass of water. It was wonderful to see the smiles on their faces after receiving it. I am sure that Lord Ayyappan will continue to bless us to carry out this seva for a lot more devotees in the coming years.

One of the important aspects of the entire Sabari Malai Yatra is what happens after the Yatra is over and you remove your Malai. When we fast for one mandalam to prepare ourselves to see Lord Ayyappan, we are inherently training and conditioning our minds and our bodies and making ourselves realise that we indeed have the ability to control our thoughts and our actions. That is a very important realisation that every Swamy must have, because that will give him the strength to carry on that discipline even after removing the Malai.

From my own experience and from what I have observed from others, once you decide that you want Lord Ayyappa as part of your life, and you start your spiritual journey to Sabari Malai, you start a transformation process that lasts throughout your life. Every Yatra, you learn something new about yourself that you never knew before.

The lessons that you learn help you to be a better person and as your life progresses upwards, more and more positive things happen. This cycle acts like a magnetic force that brings all His devotees to Him closer and closer every year. Swamiye Saranam Ayyappa! ■



The group leaving for the Yatra from Changi Airport.



Handing out water to the Swamys on Periya Pathai



Distributing food packets (Photo credits: Ravi Suppiah)

RISING FROM THE ASHES

By Swami Vimokshananda
President, Ramakrishna Mission, Singapore

Aum Namah Shivaya

This Panchakshara – five lettered – mantra is potentially efficacious in warding off evils and bestowing grace and peace of mind. Sages, saints and innumerable devotees of Lord Shiva have chanted this mantra repeatedly all through the ages. Holy ashes offered to and accepted as prasadam from Lord Shiva can indeed do wonders – from removing obstacles to bringing peace of mind.

Holy Ashes



Holy ashes

In the life of the Master, Sri Ramakrishna, we find his mother Chandradevi used to visit frequently the temple of Jugi Shiva in Kamarpukur. Once, she suddenly saw a divine effulgence coming from the holy image (linga) of the great Lord Shiva. This bright light filled the temple and rushed towards her in waves.

Engulfing her all of a sudden, the light swiftly entered into her body. Stunned with wonder and initial fear Chandradevi fell down unconscious. After recovery, she felt that she was pregnant with a child. The maid, Dhani, was helping Chandradevi during the pangs of labour. When the baby was born, Dhani kept the baby aside and was rendering necessary help to the mother. When Dhani came back she was surprised to find that the baby had disappeared from the place where she had kept it.

In alarm, she took a lamp and found to her great surprise that the baby had rolled down the ground into the hollow fireplace. It was simply lying there with its little body fully smeared with ashes like Shiva and still not crying!

Shiva's ashes had a great charming effect on the mind of the Master. Holy ashes offered to and accepted as prasada from Lord Shiva can indeed do wonders – from removing obstacles to bringing peace of mind. Indeed under the Naga sadhu Tota Puri, Sri Ramakrishna while practising meditation would smear Shiva's ashes all over his body.

At 'golden' Varanasi, Sri Ramakrishna had the vision of Shiva. In the words of Master, "I saw a tall white person with tawny matted hair walking with solemn steps to each pyre in the burning ghat, raising carefully every jiva (soul) and imparting into his ear the mantra of supreme Brahman. On the other side of the pyre, the all-powerful Mahakali was untying all the knots of bondage, gross, subtle and causal of the jiva produced by past impressions and sending him to the indivisible sphere by opening with Her own hands the door to liberation."

Glory Of The Holy Ashes

In Puranas, we find once the great Muni Durvasa while chanting the mantra – Sarvaatman Shivashankara! Srivastava Bhuvaneshwari! – was moving in the sky and came to a halt before Yamaraja. Yamaraja welcomed Durvasa Muni and showed him the entire city which was called Dharmapuri.

While discussing with Yamaraja, Durvasa Muni intermittently heard noisy sounds of weeping and wailing. Surprised at that, Durvasa Muni asked Yamaraja from where these crying sounds were coming. The dispenser of Justice Lord Yama explained to Durvasa Muni that under his control, there were fourteen heavens and twenty-eight hells. The cries that Durvasa Muni heard emanated actually from one of the hells called Kumbhipaka Naraka.

People of sinful nature who did not properly respect their elders and ancestors by not offering pinda and udaka (riceballs and water) were the cause of the ancestors' downfall into Kumbhipaka Naraka.

Hearing the heart rending cries of the ancestors, Durvasa Muni requested Lord Yama to allow him to visit Kumbhipaka Naraka. Accordingly, Lord Yama arranged his men who took Durvasa Muni to that hell.

Durvasa Muni was greatly surprised to find that Kumbhipaka Naraka was not looking like a hell. Neither weeping nor wailing! Instead, the manes were found cheerfully relaxing on comfortable beds having their drinks and meals, served by host of attendants. Lord Yama's men were also taken by surprise.

They rushed back immediately to Lord Yama and informed him of the wonderful sight they had seen in Kumbhipaka Naraka. Yamaraja thereupon informed Indra, the Lord of the Devas, about the sudden change of the nature of the hell into heaven. Not knowing the reason thereof, Lord Indra came to Kumbhipaka Naraka on his airavata (celestial elephant).

On inspection, Indra too got bewildered how the hell could change into a heaven overnight. The Devas led by Indra approached Lord Brahma, the Lord of Creation. Lord Brahma could not give any answer; so the Devas turned to Lord Vishnu from whom they could also not elicit any answer.

When finally they approached Lord Shiva for an explanation, Lord Shiva smiled and said that it was the visit of Durvasa Muni to that hell that brought about the wonderful transformation. Surprised at this, the Devas asked Lord Shiva what Durvasa Muni did to enable the change of hell into a heaven. ■



Lord Shiva

Rising From The Ashes

Lord Shiva proclaimed that Durvasa Muni was indeed a great Shivabhakta – a devotee of Shiva. Every day after having bath, Durvasa Muni would smear the holy ashes of Lord Shiva on his forehead and upper body. Due to Durvasa Muni being jolted on hearing the suffering, particles of the holy ashes fell on the grounds of Kumbhipaka Naraka.

Lord Shiva continued to say that whoever applies holy ash on his body would remember that finally all will be reduced to ashes and from the ashes, creation will rise again. By wearing ashes on one's body, a devotee can develop detachment with his body/mind complex. This would make him realise the Truth behind all these changing phenomena because Lord Shiva is the substratum of the impermanent Universe. He is Truth (Satyam). Shiva is also Auspicious (Shivam) and indeed Beauty (Sundaram) itself. Jai Shiva Shankara! Hara Hara Shankara! Aum Namah Shivaya! ■

மகாமகம் திருவிழா



மகாமகம் திருவிழா 12 ஆண்டுகளுக்கு ஒருமுறை தமிழ்நாட்டில் கும்பகோணத்தில் மிகவும் சிறப்பாகவும் பிரம்மாண்டகவும் கொண்டாடப்படுகிறது.

கடந்த மகாமகம் திருவிழா 6-3-2004ம் தேதியன்று ஒரு மில்லியன் பக்தர்களோடு கொண்டாடப்பட்டது. அடுத்த மகாமகம் திருவிழா 22-02-2016 அன்று நடைபெறும் கும்பகோணத்தில் மும்முறமாக ஏற்பாடுகள் செய்யப்படுகின்றன.

தமிழ் மாசி மாதத்தில் மகம் நட்சத்திர நாளன்று மாசிமகம் என வழிபடுகிறோம். 12 ஆண்டுகளுக்கு ஒருமுறை குரு பகவான் சிம்ம ராசியில் குடியேறும்போது, மகாமகமாகக் கொண்டாடப்படுகிறது.

கும்பகோணத்திலுள்ள இந்த திருவிழாவிற்காக 250,000 சதுர மீட்டர் பரப்பளவில் (சுமார் 5 காற்பந்து திடல்கள்) ஒரு பிரம்மாண்டமான புனித தண்ணீர் குளம் அமைக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது இதுதான் மகாமகக் குளம். மகாமகத் தினத்தின்று, பக்தர்கள் தங்கள் பாவங்களைக் கழிக்க இக்குளத்தில் நீராடத் திரண்டு வருவர். இதைத் தீர்த்தவாரி எனவும் குறிப்பிடுகின்றனர்.

இதற்காக இந்தியாவில் உள்ள முக்கிய புன்னிய நதிகளான கங்கை, யமுனை, சரஸ்வதி, சராயு, கோதாவரி, மகாநதி, நர்மதை, காவேரி தீர்த்தங்களைச் சேகரித்து மகாமகக் குளத்தில் கலக்கப்படுகின்றன. அனைத்து நதிகளில் நீராடி நம் பாவங்களைக் கழிக்கும் பலன்கள், இங்கு மகாமகத்தன்று குளத்தில் நீராடினால் போதும் என்ற ஐதீகமும் உண்டு.

Shloka to chant while applying Vibuthi on forehead

Mandiramaavadhu neeru vaanavar melathu neeru
Sundaramaavadhu neeru thuthikkap paduvathu neeru
Thandiramaavadhu neeru samayathillulathu neeru
Sendhuvar vaayumai pangan thiru aalavaayaan thiruneere

மந்திர மாவது நீறு வானவர் மேலது நீறு
சுந்தர மாவது நீறு துதிக்கப் படுவது நீறு
தந்திர மாவது நீறு சமயத்தி லுள்ளது நீறு
செந்துவர் வாயுமை பங்கன் திருஆல வாயான் திருநீறே.

மகாமகத் திருவிழாவையொட்டி, கும்பகோணத்தைச் சுற்றியுள்ள முக்கிய சிவாலயங்களிலும், விஷ்ணு கோயில்களிலும் சிறப்பு பூஜைகள் நடைபெறும். பக்தர்கள் குளத்தில் நீராடி, கோயில்களில் திரளாக வந்து தரிசனம் பெறுவது வழக்கம்.

வரும் 22-2-16ம் தேதி மகாமகத் திருவிழாவிற்குச் சுமார் 1.5 மில்லியன் பக்தர்கள் கும்பகோணத்திற்கும், சுற்றியுள்ள கோயில்களுக்கும் திரண்டு வந்து தரிசனம் பெறுவர் என எதிர்பார்க்கப்படுகிறது. ■



ALANGARAMS IN OUR TEMPLES

Alangaram or decoration of the deities is an integral part of Temple routines and festivals. There are many connotations to the word alangaram. Here is one:

- A – Admire towards Swamy Alangaram
- L – Love towards Swamy Alangaram
- A – Affection towards Swamy Alangaram
- N – New towards Swamy Alangaram
- G – Grace towards Swamy Alangaram
- A – Attraction towards Swamy Alangaram
- R – Register towards Swamy Alangaram
- A – Alive towards Swamy Alangaram
- M – Move towards Swamy Alangaram

Alangaram is a specialised skill taught by several padashalas in India. In many cases, the art of alangaram is also a family heritage, passed down through several generations in a particular family.

While many youngsters in families today have moved away from continuing the tradition, several others continue to excel in this field and bring alive the beauty of Swamy through their skills in the field of alangaram. There are several types of alangaram being done in temples.

The common ones are the alangarams done for the Utsava moorthis during the festival processions and 'santhanakapu' or sandal paste alangaram for the main deities. Recently, the alangaram priests have also excelled in doing special ones during key festivals to the awe of devotees.

King Raja Raja Cholan developed this art during his period. There are 15 different types of alangarams:

1. Sandal Alangaram
2. Butter Alangaram
3. Senthura Alangaram
4. Thambula (betel leaves) Alangaram
5. Fruits Alangaram
6. Laddu Alangaram
7. Sweets Alangaram
8. Money (notes) Alangaram
9. Jewels Alangaram
10. Navathanya Alangaram
11. Flowers Alangaram
12. Nuts Alangaram
13. Turmeric Alangaram
14. Kumkuma Alangaram
15. Sathupadi (use of hands and legs) Alangaram

Hindu News is pleased to present you with a pictorial layout of some of the alangarams done by our Temple Alangara priests. ■

சுவாமி அலங்காரம்

தொகுப்பு: கௌதம் ஸ்ரீராமபட்டர்
ஸ்ரீ ஸ்ரீநிவாசப் பெருமாள் கோயில்

கடவுளின் ரூபங்களை நாம் புரிந்து கொள்ளவும் அவரது அழகை ரசிக்கவும் நமக்கு உதவுவதே அலங்காரமாகும். சுவாமிக்கு செய்யும் அலங்காரம் என்பது மிகப் பெரிய சமுத்திரம் போன்றது. அதில் சிறிதளவு இப்போது தெரிந்து கொள்வோம். சுவாமிக்கு செய்யக்கூடிய அலங்காரம் மூன்று வகைப்படும்.

1. மூலவர் விக்ரகத்திற்குச் செய்யக் கூடிய அலங்காரம்.
2. உத்சவ மூர்த்திக்குச் செய்யக் கூடிய அலங்காரம்.
3. மூலவர், உத்சவர் போலவே தனியாக செய்யக் கூடிய அலங்காரம்.

இந்த அலங்காரங்களில் சந்தனக்காப்பு, வெண்ணைக்காப்பு, விழுதி பூச்சு மற்றும் பஞ்சலோகத்தாலான ஹஸ்தம் பாதங்களையும் வைத்து அலங்காரம் செய்யலாம்.

சந்தனக்காப்பு அலங்காரம் செய்ய சுமார் 3 அல்லது 4 மணி நேரம் தேவைப்படுகிறது. ஒவ்வொரு அலங்காரத்திற்கு ஏற்ப அதிக நேரம் தேவைப்படுகிறது. அதிக நேரம் செலவழித்துச் செய்யும் பொழுது அலங்காரம் சிறப்பாக அமையும். ஒரு பிம்பத்தை மாற்றுவதற்கு அதாவது வேறு வடிவங்களைக் காட்டுவதற்கு சந்தனத்தால் ஹஸ்தம், பாதம் செய்ய வேண்டும். இதே போன்று வேறு அலங்காரத்திற்கு துணிகளால் ஹஸ்தம் பாதங்களைத் தயார் செய்ய வேண்டும்.

சாள்திரங்களில் கூறியது போல் துணிகளையும், கயிறுகளையும் மற்றும் தேங்காய்களையும் விக்ரகத்தில் இணைத்து பல ரூபங்களை அமைக்க வேண்டும்.

காஞ்சி மகா பெரியவர் கூறியது போல் கயிறுகளை சுவாமியின் நரம்பாகவும், தேங்காய் மற்றும் துணிகளை சுவாமியின் சதை வடிவமாகவும், சந்தனத்தை தோல்களாகவும் பாவித்து அமைக்கப்படுகிறது.

மேலும் அலங்காரத்தில் அழகு சேர்க்க நகை மற்றும் சந்தனக்காப்பு அலங்காரத்தில் ஐகினா தூள், வண்ண பேப்பர்களைப் பயன்படுத்தப்படுகிறது.

ஒரு சுவாமியின் ரூபத்தை மனதில் கற்பனை செய்துகொண்டு அதற்கு தேவையான பல பொருட்களைச் சேகரித்து பயன்படுத்தி செய்யும்போது அலங்காரம் சிறப்பாக அமைகிறது.

இதுவே சுவாமி அலங்காரத்தின் சிறு தகவலாகவும் கலியுகத்தில் இறைவனை நேரில் காண சிறந்த வழி அலங்காரமாகும். ஆகவே பல அலங்காரங்களில் பல ரூபங்களில் கண்டு ரசித்து இறைவனின் அருளை பெறுவோம். ■



பகல் பத்து இராப் பத்து – அத்யயனோத்ஸவம்



அத்யயனோத்ஸவம் என்பது நமது ஆழ்வார் ஆச்சார்யர்களால் அநுஸந்திக்கப்பட்ட மிகப்பெரிய உத்ஸவம் ஆகும். இந்த அத்யயன உத்ஸவத்தைப் பகல் பத்து இராப் பத்து இரண்டு பாகங்களாக நமது ஆழ்வார் ஆச்சார்யர்கள் நமக்கு அளித்துள்ளனர். இதில் பகல்பத்து என்பது கார்த்திகை மாதத்தின் நடுவில் தொடங்கி வைகுண்ட ஏகாதசி வரை நடைபெறும். வைகுண்ட ஏகாதசியிலிருந்து தொடங்கி அடுத்த பத்து நாட்கள் நடைபெறுவதை இராப்பத்து என்று கூறுவர்.

இந்த அத்யயனோத்ஸவம் என்பது எப்படி வந்தது? ஆழ்வார்களால் பாடப்பட்ட நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப்ரபந்தம் ஆனது நமது ஆச்சார்யர்களின் காலத்தில் மறைந்து விட்டது. அதாவது அநுஸந்தானம் செய்ய முடியாத நிலையில் இருந்தது இந்த திவ்யப்ரபந்தங்கள். அப்பொழுது நாதமுனிகள் என்ற ஆச்சார்யர் வாழ்ந்து வந்த காலத்தில் அவர் திவ்யதேச யாத்திரை மேற்கொண்டபோது திருக்குடந்தை எனும் திவ்யதேசத்தைச் சேவிக்க வந்த சமயம் அங்கே அமுதன் சந்நிதியில் இரண்டு வைஷ்ணவர்கள் “ஆராவமுதே” என்று தொடங்கும் திவ்யப்ரபந்த பாடலைப் பாடிக்கொண்டிருந்தனர். அந்த பாடலைக் கேட்ட நாதமுனிகள் கண்ணீர் மல்க, அவர்களிடம் சென்று “இந்த பத்து பாடல்கள் யாருடையது, யார் அருளி செய்தார்?” என்று கேட்க இப்பாடல்கள் நம்மாழ்வாரால் பாடப்பட்ட திருவாய்மொழி எனும் க்ரந்தம் ஆகும். இதில் ஆயிரம் பாசுரங்கள் உள்ளன என்று பதிலளித்தனர். மேலும் இன்னும் மூவாயிரம் பாசுரங்கள்



(1) Sathupadi alangaram for Sri Mariamman during Navarathri; (2) Alangaram with rice flour (Maakaapu) for Sri Srinivasa Perumal (Photo credit: Mahesh A.); (3) Rice and fruits alankaram for Sri Viswanathar on Aippasi Pournami (Annabishegam); (4) Flower alangaram for Sri Periyachi; (5) Vennaikaapu (butter) alangaram for Sri Anjaneyar; (6) Sandal paste alangaram for Sri Vinayagar (Narthana Ganapathy); (7) Flower and sandal paste alangaram for Swamy Ayyappan

உள்ளன என்றனர். உடனே நாதமுனிகள் அனைத்து நான்காயிரம் பாசுரங்களையும் தமக்கு அநுக்ரஹம் செய்ய வேண்டும் எனக் கேட்டுக்கொண்டார்.

எல்லாப் பாசுரங்களும் தெரியாது எனவும் அவை அந்த சமயம் மறைந்து இருந்ததாம். பூலோகத்தில் யாரிடமும் அநுஸந்தானம் பெற இயலாது என்றனர். வேண்டுமென்றால் தேவரீர் அநுஸந்தானம் செய்ய சுவாமி நம்மாழ்வாரிடம் மட்டுமே செய்யமுடியும் என்று மதுரகவியாழ்வார் அருள்செய்து கண்ணிநுள்சிறுத்தாம்பு எனும் பத்து பாசுரங்களை உபதேசித்தார். இதை யாரொருவர் (அஹோராத்திரம்) அதாவது ஏழு இரவுகள் உணவும் உறக்கமும் இல்லாமல் அநுஸந்தானம் செய்தால் சுவாமி நம்மாழ்வாரின் தரிசனம் கிட்டுவது நிச்சயம் என்றார். உடனே நாதமுனிகள் ஏழு இரவுகளுக்கு உணவும் உறக்கமும் இல்லாமல் கண்ணிநுள்சிறுத்தாம்பு எனும் பிரபந்தத்தை அநுஸந்தித்தார். ஏழு இரவுகளின் முடிவில் நம்மாழ்வாரின் அநுக்ரஹமும் கிடைத்தது. நாதமுனிவருக்கே நாலாயிரம் திவ்யப்ரபந்த பாசுரங்களையும் அநுக்ரஹம் செய்ய வேண்டும் என்று கேட்க நம்மாழ்வாரும் அருள் செய்தார். திவ்யப்ரபந்தங்களை ஸ்ரீரங்கம் சென்று பெருமாளிடம் அநுஸந்தானம் செய்யுமாறு கூறி நம்மாழ்வார் அந்தர்தானம் ஆனார்.

நாதமுனிகள் ஸ்ரீரங்கம் கோயிலுக்குச் சென்று பெருமாள் சன்னதியில் அநுஸந்தானம் செய்யும் வேளையில் இதற்கு முன்பு முன்னோர்கள் இப்பிரபந்தத்தை அநுஸந்தித்தார்களா என்ற கேள்வியுடன் யோசித்துக்கொள்ளும்போது, பெருமாள் நாதமுனிவர் முன் தோன்றினார்கள். இதற்கு முன் திருமங்கையாழ்வார் இப்பிரபந்தங்களை அநுஸந்தித்துள்ளார் என்று கூறினார். அதன்பிறகு நாதமுனிகளும் பெருமாள் சன்னதியில் நாலாயிரம்

திவ்யப்ரபந்தங்களையும் அநுஸந்தித்தார். இதற்கு பெருமாளே அத்யயணோத்ஸவம் என்று பெயரிட்டு இதைத்தொடர்ந்து அநுஸந்தித்து வரச்சொன்னார்.

அன்றிலிருந்து மார்கழி மாதத்தில் வைகுண்ட ஏகாதசி அன்று தொடங்கி பத்து நாட்கள் அநுஸந்திப்பதை இராப் பத்து என்றும், அதற்கு முன்பு பத்து நாட்கள் திருமொழி உற்சவமாகப் பகல்பத்து என்றும் அநுஸந்தித்து வருகின்றனர். இப்பிரபந்தங்களை வேதம் அநுஸந்திக்கும் காலத்திலும் அநுஸந்திக்கச் செய்தனர் ஆச்சாரியர்கள்.

இப்பிரபந்தம் வேதத்தின் சாரமாக விளங்குவதால் திராவிடவேதம் என்றும் கூறுவர்.

மதுரகவியாழ்வார் அருள்செய்த கண்ணிநுள்சிறுத்தாம்பு

“கண்ணிநுள் சிறுத்தாம்பினால் கட்டுண்ணப் பண்ணிய பெருமாயன் என்னப்பனில் நண்ணித் தென்குருகூர் நம்பி என்றக்கால் அண்ணிக்கும் அமுதாறும் என் நாவுக்கே”

இந்த நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப்ரபந்தங்களையும் யாரொருவர் தனது இல்லத்திலோ அல்லது கோயில்களிலோ அநுஸந்தானம் செய்கிறார்களோ, அவர்களுக்குக் பெருமாள் அநுக்ரஹமும், ஆழ்வார்கள் ஆச்சாரியர்களுடைய கிருபையும் கிட்டுவது திண்ணம்.

கண்ணன்கழலினை! நன்னுமனமுடையீர்! என்னும் திருநாமம்! திண்ணம் நாரணமே!

திருவாய்மொழி. ■

குஜராத் மாநிலத்தின் சோமநாத் கோயில்



சோமநாத் எனப்படும் சோமநாதபுரம், குஜராத் மாநிலத்தில் தெற்கு கடலோரத்தில் அரேபியக் கடலை நோக்கி அமைந்துள்ளது. சிவபெருமானின் 12 ஜோதிரலிங்கங்களுள் இதுவும் ஒன்று. அம்மனின் 51 சக்தி பீடங்களில் இது பிரபாஸா (வயிறு) சக்தி பீடம் ஆகும்.

சகல பாவங்களும் நீங்கவும், இறப்பிற்கு பின் முக்தி கிடைக்கவும் இங்குள்ள சோமநாதரை வழிபடலாம்.

சோமநாதபுரத்தில் இருகோயில்கள் உள்ளன. பழைய கோயில் கருவறைக்குச் செல்ல குறுகிய பாதை வழியே படிக்கட்டுகளில் இறங்கினால் பாதாளத்தில் சிவலிங்கத்தைத் தரிசிக்கலாம். பழைய கோயில் புதிய கோயிலின் இடபுறமுகப்பில் அமைந்துள்ளது. புதிய கோயில் கடற்கரை ஓரத்தில் கட்டப்பட்டுள்ளது. கர்ப்பகிரகத்தின் மேலே பல கோபுரங்கள் கட்டப்பட்டுள்ளன.

சோமன் எனப்படும் சந்திரபகவான் இத்தலத்தில் சிவபெருமானை வழிபட்டு வந்ததால் சோமநாதம் எனப் பெயர் உண்டாகியது. சோமநாதபுரம் பிரபாசப் பட்டணம் எனப் புகழ்பெற்று தலை சிறந்த தலமாக விளங்கியது. புராணகாலம், வேத காலம், இதிகாச காலம், தற்காலம் என பல காலங்களிலும் புனிதத் தலமாக விளங்கிவருகிறது. பன்னிரு ஜோதிரலிங்கத் தலங்களில் வரிசைப்படி,



View of Somnath Temple from the seashore

Somnath Temple In Gujarat

Somnath Temple of Lord Shiva is an ancient temple located in southern coast of the state of Gujarat. Somnath is one of the 12 jyotirlinga shrines of Lord Shiva and is also called Prabhas or stomach. It is also one of the 51 Shakthi Peethams.

Legends state that Moon God or Lord Soma worshipped Lord Shiva here, which resulted in the creation of this Temple and hence the name Somnath, which means the Lord of Soma.

Somanath Temple depicts the story of a city which withstood the shocks of time and survived the attacks of destroyers. History states that the Afghan King, Ghajini Mohammad invaded India 17 times. Within these invasions, he had destroyed Somnath Temple 7 times and looted its wealth. The present structure was built and renovated in 1947, by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

The Temple is situated at an extraordinary geographical location. Facing south, there is no land in between Somnath's seashore to northern coasts of Antarctica, about 10,000 km across Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and Antarctic Ocean. ■

[Source: www.dinamalar.com / www.indianmirror.com]

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF MARICHA



Rama kills the golden deer, which is Maricha in disguise

foolishly threatening to defeat him.

However, one's inherent nature reasserts. Along with other demons, Maricha was, again, trying, in the guise of a deer, to destroy the ashrams of some rishis. Rama spotted him and shot an arrow. Since Maricha turned his back and ran away, which is a signal of accepting defeat, Rama, the embodiment of dharma (righteousness), spared his life. Maricha's learning got reinforced. He gave up the life of a rakshasa and aspired to live the life of an ascetic.

When Ravana, enraged at Soorpanakha's humiliation by Lakshmana, asked Maricha to distract Rama to enable him to carry Sita away, he refused initially. He pleaded with Ravana to desist from the evil and risky plan. He praised Rama, knowing that Ravana would not like it, and would get annoyed. He called Rama the very personification of dharma. Rama was also strong. But, he did not misuse his strength for personal pleasure and dominance. Instead, he used it to protect dharma. Maricha implied that Ravana should do the same. Maricha went further.

You probably have heard about Ramayana, and listened to the stories from elders in your family or storytellers.

You may have also read one or more books on the Ramayana. One can read great epics, such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata, at different stages of life.

You will find newer, deeper meanings and form positive impressions about some characters, such as Hanuman, Guha and Vibhishana. You may also have developed negative views of some, such as Ravana, Vali or Soorpanakha. One such apparently negative character is Maricha, who came as a golden deer and lured Rama and Lakshmana to chase him, so that Ravana could abduct Sita.

But, even from such a character, we can learn some useful values. Maricha was not totally bad. It is bad company, such as that of Ravana, which made him practise adharma (unrighteousness). Maricha saw the strength of Rama and Lakshmana, when they protected Rishi Vishwamitra's yajna, against disruption by Maricha and Subhahu, his brother. The latter got killed. Rama did not kill Maricha. But, his arrow drove Maricha deep into the oceans. Maricha learned his lesson. He decided to keep away from Rama, instead of egoistically and



Maricha, who had turned over a new leaf and was living the life of an ascetic, advising Ravana against his evil plot to abduct Sita

He called Ravana's desire for Sita a sin. He warned the mighty Ravana, with prophetic foresight, that the forcible capture of Sita would bring ruin to Ravana, Lanka and her people. Ravana, however, forced Maricha. What could poor Maricha do? If he refused, he might have been killed by Ravana. So, he bought time, as most living beings will, by playing the role demanded by Ravana.

By comparison, one can see the even better nature of Vibhishana. He also gave Ravana the same advice as Maricha. But, when Ravana did not listen, Vibhishana left Lanka and joined forces with Rama and Sugriva to defeat the adharma of Ravana. He took the risk of being mistrusted by people close to Rama, as a possible spy, sent by Ravana.

That was a positive risk, worth taking, that the very negative

risk of siding with Ravana's adharma and getting destroyed, along with him and Lanka. But, his courage was vindicated. Rama treated him with due respect, as an ally. After defeating Ravana, Rama crowned Vibhishana as a legitimate king of Lanka, much to the satisfaction of her people.

We can pick up a few useful lessons from Maricha. First, appreciate the strength and virtue of your adversary. Second, avoid further conflict with such a righteous person. Third, if allowed to escape from a wrong path, turn over a new leaf. Fourth, speak up against adharma, however strong and closely related the person who is planning such evil acts. ■

[Written by MB Athreya. Adapted from the monthly, *Tattvāloka, The Splendour of Truth* (August 2015).]

MEDITATION



stimulation. Soft music aids relaxation. You may also practice relaxation techniques such as progressive muscular relaxation, visualisation, autogenic training, self-hypnosis or different forms of meditation and yoga.

Regular meditation helps to reduce hypertension, insomnia, migraine, depression, anxiety and other psychosomatic illnesses. It also improves brain function by enhancing a balance between the two separate hemispheres of the brain, promoting creativity, love, compassion, etc.

Methods Of Meditation

Any method that creates awareness with relaxation is the right method. The methods may vary from person to person and one has to find out his or her own method. While all the methods overlap, they can be classified under three heads.

Active (Body Oriented)



In this technique, the body is used a lot. These methods are primarily used to activate the opposite poles of the body resulting in a deep cleansing of the body. Many blocks created in physical energy by mental conflicts also gets removed. Active methods include – Hatha Yoga: dynamic meditation (chaotic breathing), Kundalini, Nataraj (dancing meditation), Whirling (Sufi method), Sudarshan Kriya, Laughing and Crying meditation.

In simple terms, meditation can be defined as total relaxation of the mind and therefore, the body. Mental health leads to physical well-being, while a healthy body helps retain a healthy frame of mind as well.

Meditation can also be defined as the art of living in the present moment. The mind almost always dwells in the past or future. All our stress arises either from the past or the future. Relaxation can be achieved by living in the present moment.

The experience of deep relaxation or the art of living in the present moment creates the required deep silent mind to understand the spiritual dimension, the dimension which is beyond the real self. Hence, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as the well-being of physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions.

Healing Effects Of Meditation

Health is the balance between harmony, rhythm and natural flow of life energy, through every part of the body. Diseases occur when this flow is interrupted. Poor lifestyle, emotional conflict, mental tension, inherited predispositions with consequent energy depletions are the main causes of poor health.

A number of physical diseases are often related to these subtle problems. Meditation is very helpful in overcoming these problems. Medication heals the body from outside, whereas meditation heals it from inside.

The easiest way to meditate is by either lying down, sitting on the ground or sitting on a chair in a comfortable position. Eyes should be closed and noise eliminated to reduce external

Passive (Mind Oriented)



These are basically mind oriented techniques which involves minimal body activity. This method makes an individual focus on the breath, sound, word, light, etc. Passive techniques are – Raja Yoga: chanting of mantras, transcendental meditation, meditation on sound/music, mirror gazing, humming, Trataka (concentration method), visualisation, Vipassana, Za Zen, Kriya Yoga, Chakra breathing, Chakra sound, etc.

Heart (Emotion Oriented)



In these methods, the heart and emotions are involved. Deeply emotional and devotionally inclined people can be benefitted by this method. Heart oriented methods include – Bhakti Yoga: kirtanas, bhajans, prayers etc. ■

[Adapted from *BPositive Health and Lifestyle* (May 2013).]

MAHA SIVARATHRI
மஹா சிவராத்திரி
महा शिवरात्रि

7.3.2016 திங்கள்/கிழமை முதல் 8.3.2016 செவ்வாய்க்கிழமை வரை
 7.3.2016 Monday To 8.3.2016 Tuesday

மஹா சிவராத்திரி சிறப்பு வழிபாடுகள்
Maha Sivarathri Special Prayers

7.3.2016 (திங்கள்/கிழமை / Monday)
1008 பால் கலச அபிஷேகம்
 (கிரவு 8.30 மணி முதல் கிரவு 11.30 வரை) கட்டணம் \$12
1008 Milk Pot Abishegam
 (8.30pm to 11.30pm) Participation Fee \$12

8.3.2016 (செவ்வாய்க்கிழமை/Tuesday)
தங்க வில்வ இலை அர்ச்சனை
 (கிடைசு 2.30 மணிக்கு) கட்டணம் \$5
Gold Vilva Leaf Archanai
 (at 2.30am) Participation Fee \$5

8.3.2016 (செவ்வாய்க்கிழமை / Tuesday)
திருக்கல்யாண சீர்வரிசை
 (கிடைசு 5.30 மணிக்கு) கட்டணம் \$21
Thirukalyana Seervarisai
 (at 5.30pm) Participation Fee \$21

SRI SIVAN TEMPLE
 No.24 Geylang East Ave.2, Singapore 389752
 Tel : 6743 4566 Fax : 6743 7622
 Email : sst@shb.gov.sg



All are invited to take part and receive the Blessings of Lord VISWANATHAR and Goddess VISALAKSHI

வாழ்க்கை... வழிபாடுகளான அனைத்து பொருட்களும் கோயிலில் வழங்கப்படும்
 Items for devotees participation will be provided by the Temple

PROJECT BHAKTI

Educational, fun & interactive classes based on Hindu values

SUNDAY CLASSES – 9am to 11am

Starting Date: **Sunday, 31 Jan 2016**

For 5th – 12 year olds, register* at:

- Arulmigu Veimurugan Gnanamuneeswarar Temple (Sengkang)
- Darma Muneeswaran Temple (Serangoon North)
- Sri Muneeswaran Temple (Queenstown)
- Sri Siva-Krishna Temple (Marsiling)
- Sri Sivan Temple (Geylang)
- Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple (Little India)

Children born in 2011 and before * Walk-in registrations only

Celebrating 15 years

NEW!! SATURDAY CLASSES – 2pm to 4pm

Starting Date: **Saturday, 30 Jan 2016**

For 5th – 12 year olds, register* at:

- Shree Lakshminarayan Temple (Little India)
- Sri Krishnan Temple (Bugis)

Children born in 2011 and before * Walk-in registrations only

About Our Classes

- Conducted in English
- Two semesters per year – January & July
- 12 classes per semester
- Once a week only
- \$30 per child per semester
- Free transport available for most locations (Subject to availability on a 'first come first served' basis)
- Light refreshments are provided

Call us for more info:
9694 8500
9062 8884



PROJECT BHAKTI
Basic Knowledge & Teachings
of Hinduism

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A project by the
Hindu Endowments Board

Our fun and interactive classes include



TEENS CLASSES – Sundays, 10am to 12nn

Starting Date: **Sunday, 31 Jan 2016**

For Teens 13 – 16 year olds

Venue: Hindu Endowments Board

- Limited to 20 seats only
- 12 dynamic sessions conducted in English
- Covers basics of Hinduism, shlokas, yoga, brain power improving techniques, outings, doing seva & much more!
- Fees – \$30 only

Call us for more info:
9694 8500
9025 7576



"We should tread on the path of knowledge and attain growth and progress." (Rig Veda)

SINGAPORE PUBLIC & SCHOOL HOLIDAYS FOR 2016

Public Holidays

HOLIDAY	DATE
New Year's Day	Friday, 1 January
Chinese New Year	Monday, 8 February Tuesday, 9 February
Good Friday	Friday, 25 March
Labour Day	¹ Sunday, 1 May
Vesak Day	² Saturday, 21 May
Hari Raya Puasa	Wednesday, 6 July
National Day	Tuesday, 9 August
Hari Raya Haji	Monday, 12 September
Deepavali	³ Saturday, 29 October
Christmas Day	⁴ Sunday, 25 December

Note:

- (1) Monday, 2 May will be a public holiday. (2) Monday, 23 May, will be a school holiday. (3) Monday, 31 October, will be a school holiday. (4) Monday, 26 Dec will be a public holiday.

School Holidays (For Primary And Secondary Schools)

SEMESTER 1	
Between Terms 1 and 2	Saturday, 12 March – Sunday, 20 March
Between Semesters 1 and 2	Saturday, 28 May – Sunday, 26 June

SEMESTER 2	
Youth Day	Sunday, 3 July & Monday, 4 July 2015
Day after National Day	Wednesday, 10 August
Teachers' Day	Friday, 2 September
Between Terms 3 and 4	Saturday, 3 September – Sunday, 11 September
Children's Day	Friday, 7 October (for Primary Schools only)
At the End of School Year	Saturday, 19 November – Saturday, 31 December

HINDU FESTIVALS

FESTIVALS	MONTH	DATE	DAY
Thai Pongal	Thai	15.01.2016	Friday
Thai Karthigai	Thai	19.01.2016	Tuesday
Thaipusam	Thai	24.01.2016	Sunday
Thai Amavasai	Thai	08.02.2016	Monday
Maasi Magam	Maasi	22.02.2016	Monday
Maha Sivarathiri	Maasi	07.03.2016	Monday
Panguni Uthiram	Panguni	23.03.2016	Wednesday

HEALING WITH SPICES

Nature has bestowed us with an enormous range of fruits, vegetables, plants and herbs, all filled with healing properties. Natural treatments are considered alternative therapies to conventional medicine because of its nature of cure – simple, no side effects, ready availability and inexpensiveness. The kitchen is a great place to start. It has almost all the ingredients that you would need to deal with common ailments.



Turmeric (Manjal)

Turmeric can be applied externally as a paste to relieve itches and mild skin diseases during monsoons. In cooking, besides adding a rich colour to gravies, its intake helps purify blood and soothe inflamed sinusitis. Pungent fumes of heated raw turmeric stick are considered to be an excellent cure for cold and cough. It can be used as a depilatory to remove unwanted hair.

During the annual Fire Walking Festival at Sri Mariamman Temple, the male devotees apply turmeric on their feet after their penance to ease any irritations thereafter.

Fenugreek (Vendayam)

Fenugreek cures body aches that afflict some older people during monsoon. It is also prescribed for patients which chronic cough problems. It brings relief to gout and combats diabetes. Some Indian doctors suggest its use for liver problems as it helps to reduce the enlargement of spleen.



Asafoetida (Perungaayam)

Asafoetida cures a variety of stomach ailments, ranging from indigestion to diarrhoea. A mixture of equal parts of asafoetida, camphor and pure honey is also believed to cure toothaches and other joint pains.

Black Pepper (Milagu)

Black pepper combined with pure honey and a few drops of ginger juice is known to clear throat infections. Black pepper also rejuvenates the liver and builds up appetite.



Coriander Seeds (Kottamalli)

Coriander seeds help digestion and insomnia. They enhance the digestive process by encouraging enzyme action, therefore, relieving flatulence.

Cardamom (Yellakkai)

Cardamom is highly effective in combating bad breath, nausea, headaches, piles and minor eye irritations. Ground cardamom seed mixed with ginger, cloves and coriander, is an effective remedy for indigestion. It is beneficial in relieving gas and heartburn caused by excessive consumption of garlic and onion.



Cinnamon (Pattai)

Cinnamon is anti-microbial in nature and used for treatment of common digestive disorders. Half a teaspoon of cinnamon powder every day is purported to reduce blood sugar levels in those with Type 2 diabetes. It is also considered effective in reducing triglycerides and LDL cholesterol. Its anti-inflammatory properties are believed to be useful in relieving arthritic pain.

Cloves (Girambu)

Cloves are believed to be beneficial during fever, cough and cold. Their anti-inflammatory properties help in relieving arthritic pain and curing insect bites. Their anti-microbial property is helpful for digestive problems and nausea. Clove oil is a traditional remedy to relieve toothaches and sore gums.



Sesame Seeds (Yellu)

Sesame seeds are a proven digestive cure. They also aid in preventing hair loss.



Ginger (Inji)

Ginger is an anti-inflammatory. Used as a compress to relieve inflamed joints and sprains, it is also applied to the chest for bronchitis and colds, and in the abdomen for menstrual cramps. Infused with tea, ginger is considered a natural remedy for congestions, colds and to improve circulation.

Fennel (Perunjeeragam)

Fennel is used to improve eyesight, aid digestion and cure obesity. A teaspoon or two of an infusion prepared by boiling a tablespoon of fennel seeds in 100mL water for half an hour is helpful in treating indigestion, biliousness, flatulence, constipation and atonic dyspepsia.



Mustard (Kadugu)

Mustard has always held an important place in natural medicine. It has been prescribed for toothaches, bruises, stiff neck, rheumatism, colic and respiratory troubles. When applied to the scalp, mustard oil helps to reduce hair fall.



Cumin (Jeeragam)

Cumin seeds have an astringent, cooling, antispasmodic, sedative, digestive and antiseptic properties. Traditional healers prescribe roasted seeds in daily meals for lactating women to increase milk flow after delivery. A teaspoon of cumin chewed after lunch and dinner is said to combat excessive stomach acidity and indigestion. Honey can be added to cumin to treat stomach ache. ■



Caution: While natural remedies are a wonderful aid as an add-on to medication or for simple relief, it is essential that any ailment must first be addressed by a doctor and cleared that it is a simple ailment.

TOFU – BEANCURD



Tofu (bean curd)

Tofu is an excellent source of amino acids, iron, calcium and other micronutrients. Derived from soya, it has many health benefits. Tofu is made by curdling fresh soya milk, straining the liquid and then pressing it firmly to form a solid block. This is similar to any cheese or paneer. It is versatile and can be cooked in many different ways as its texture can be changed from soft to crisp and crunchy.

Tofu originated in China. Legend says that it was discovered 2000 or so years ago by a Chinese cook who curdled soy milk when he added nigari seaweed. It came into Japan in the 8th century and was called okabe. Tofu came into use in the 1400s. It came to the west by the 1960s as a health food.

Tofu is an excellent source of iron and calcium and protein with all essential amino acids. It contains minerals, such as manganese, selenium and phosphorous. It is a good source of magnesium, copper, zinc and vitamin B1.

Like soya beans, tofu protects against cancer. It helps lower cholesterol and thus prevents heart disease. ■

Broccoli, Tofu And Peanut Stir Fry



Ingredients

Oil	2 tbs
1/2" chunks tofu	1 cup
Broccoli florets and stems (sliced and steamed)	2 cups
Roasted peanuts (crushed into crumbs)	1/2 cup
Raisins	1/2 cup
Peanut butter	1/2 cup
Hot water	1/2 cup
Soy sauce	2 tbs
Tomato/chilli sauce	1 tbs

Method

1. Heat oil in a large skillet/tava and brown tofu over medium high heat.
2. Add steamed broccoli, peanuts and raisins. Cover and cook for 2 minutes.
3. In a bowl, stir together tomato/chilli sauce and peanut butter. Mix in the hot water and soy sauce.
4. Pour sauce over broccoli and tofu mixture and toss. Serve with steamed rice, rotis, toasted bread or as a topping with bruschetta.

[Written by Padmini Natarajan. Adapted from the monthly, *Tattvāloka, The Splendour of Truth* (August 2015).]

FIRE WALKING FESTIVAL



Chief Pandaram crossing the fire pit at Sri Mariamman Temple



Victory procession for Sri Drowpathai the day after Fire Walking Festival

ARUDRA DHARISANAM



Observance of the Arudra Dharisanam at Sri Sivan Temple



Swamy purappadu (deity procession) following the prayers

VAIKUNDA EKADASI FESTIVAL



Viswaroopam on the morning of Vaikunda Ekadasi



Prayers in the Vasanta Mandapam after opening of the Swargavasal



Array of alankarams featured for Vaikunda Ekadasi included (from left to right) – Sri Parthasarathy Swamy, Sri Uppliappan Swamy and Sri Rangamannar Swamy



Cultural performances by children for the Lord



Silver chariot procession for Sri Srinivasa Perumal in the Little India district

SARASWATHY POOJAI AT SMT



Rajamathangi alankaram at Sri Mariamman Temple



Children participating in Saraswathy poojai



IRUMUDI FESTIVAL



Preparation and tying of Irumudi



Devotees of all ages fulfilling their vows

BHAJANS



Lord Muruga

Lord Muruga

Velavaa velavaa vel murugaa vaa vaa
vel murugaa vaa vaa vel murgaa vaa vaa
velavaa shanmugaa murugaa murugaa
vadi velavaa shanmugaa murugaa murugaa
(Velavaa velavaa...)

Valli manaa vaalaa kunjari manaalaa
kunjari manaalaa
velavaa shanmugaa murugaa murugaa
vadi velavaa shanmugaa murugaa murugaa

Shooradhi shooraa subhramanya devaa
subhramanya devaa
shanmugaa sharavanaa murugaa murugaa
shiva shanmugaa sharavanaa murugaa murugaa

வேலவா வேலவா வேல் முருகா வா வா
வேல் முருகா வா வா வேல் முருகா வா வா
வேலவா சண்முகா முருகா முருகா
வடிவேலவா சண்முகா முருகா முருகா
(வேலவா வேலவா...)

வள்ளி மணவாளா குஞ்சரி மணாளா
குஞ்சரி மணாளா
வேலவா சண்முகா முருகா முருகா முருகா
வடி வேலவா சண்முகா முருகா முருகா முருகா

சுராதி சூரா சுப்ரமண்ய தேவா
சுப்ரமண்ய தேவா
சண்முகா சரவணா முருகா முருகா
சிவ சண்முகா சரவணா முருகா முருகா முருகா
To listen to these bhajans, visit www.thaipusam.sg and click on 'Bhajans' on the main menu. ■

Valli mohana pulli mayil vaahanaa murugaa
aarumugaa kandaa sundara vadanaa

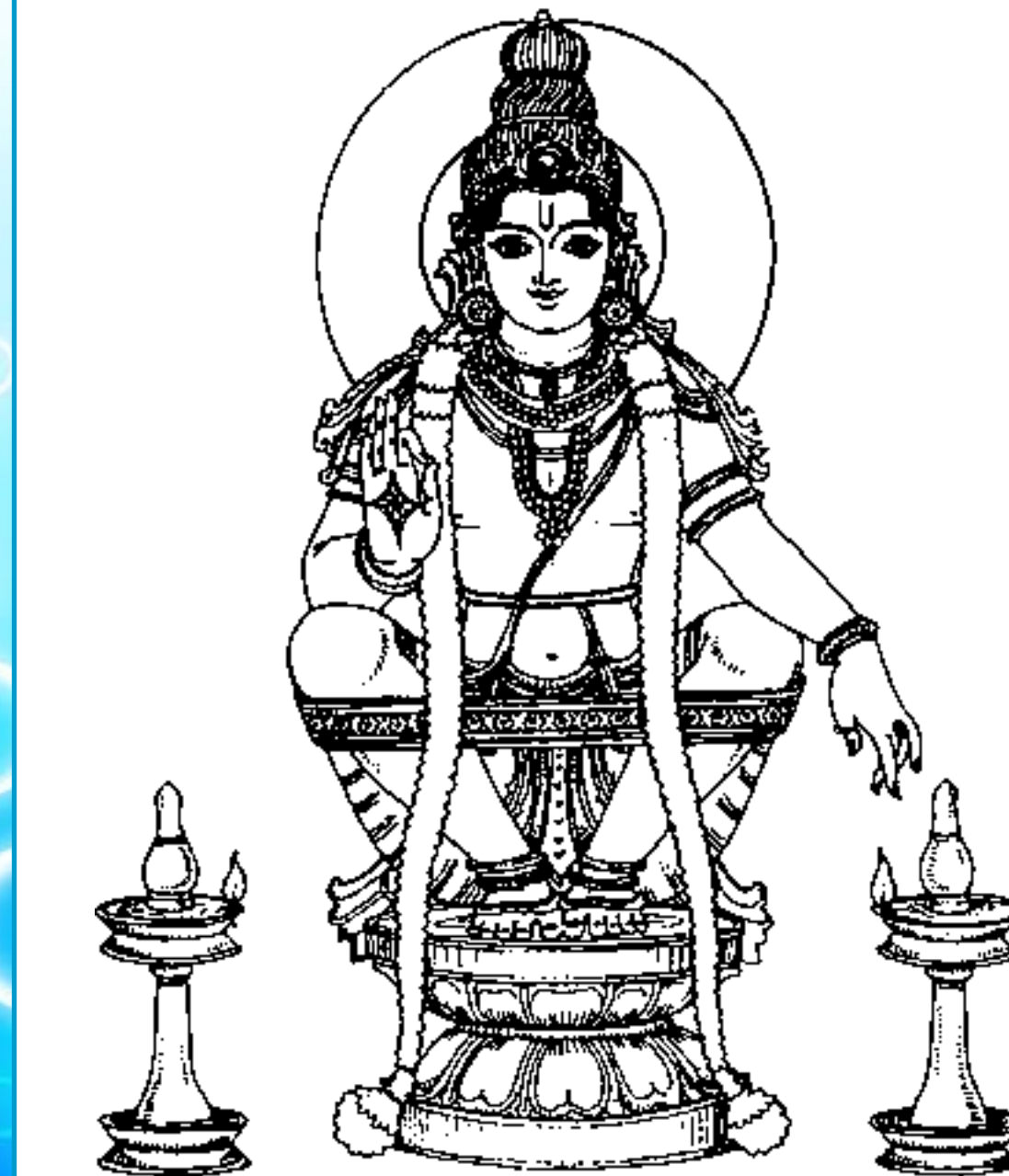
Kumara gurupara shanmukha vadi velavaa
murugaa hari om marugaa shiva shakti baalakaa

வள்ளி மோகன புள்ளி மயில் வாகனா முருகா
ஆறுமுகா கந்தா சுந்தர வதனா

குமர குருபர சண்முக வடிவேலவா
முருகா ஹரி ஓம் முருகா சிவ சக்தி பாலகா

Cut along the dotted line

Lord Ayyappan is also known as Hariharaputra, Sastha and Manikandan. There is a famous temple for Lord Ayyappan in Sabarimala, Kerala. Lord Ayyappan is often depicted as a youth, riding on a tiger and with a bow and arrow. Colour the picture to give it a complete look.



Category 1 (Age group: 5–8 years)

Name: _____

Age: _____

Contact number: _____

Address: _____

Send in your entries, complete with details by 15 March 2016 to:

The Editor, Hindu News
Hindu Endowments Board
Singapore 218123



Cut along the dotted line

HANUMAN WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

There are 9 hidden names of Lord Hanuman in the puzzle below. Circle all of them.

E	R	A	H	X	X	N	L	S	H	P	C	O	M	S
O	O	T	B	E	S	V	L	E	I	F	A	N	R	M
O	K	A	P	E	E	S	H	W	A	R	A	M	A	E
I	S	I	O	L	D	O	T	M	A	D	E	R	N	F
D	F	A	N	R	A	E	Z	T	N	A	C	H	J	R
E	K	T	M	A	N	O	J	A	V	A	Y	A	A	L
E	G	B	N	A	S	H	N	G	E	X	U	I	N	K
L	E	D	S	H	E	I	T	T	T	E	X	O	E	G
M	Z	B	A	J	R	A	N	G	B	A	L	I	Y	H
S	A	N	K	A	T	A	M	O	C	H	A	N	A	N
S	S	R	S	P	A	V	A	N	P	U	T	R	A	D
R	R	E	U	F	R	A	M	A	D	O	O	T	A	K
G	K	U	H	T	E	E	N	C	X	I	N	L	D	P
N	T	V	M	D	I	L	Z	R	I	S	F	A	N	O
M	C	I	Y	J	E	E	N	D	S	O	S	S	O	T

Category 2 (Age group: 9–12 years)

Name: _____

Age: _____

Contact number: _____

Address: _____

Send in your entries, complete with details by 15 March 2016 to:

The Editor, Hindu News
 Hindu Endowments Board
 Singapore 218123

Here are the winners of the Kids Zone activities from Hindu News Issue 04/2015:

Category 1 Prize Winners:

1st prize: Athithian s/o Madhavan

2nd prize: Nithilan

3rd prize: Muthukasi Vairavan M.

Category 2 Prize Winners:

1st prize: Amalesh Saravanan

2nd prize: Niranjana Vasu

3rd prize: Prithvi B.

Congratulations to all of you!