

Vedanshi

The part of the sacred knowledge

He who knows Me as the unborn, as the beginningless, as the Supreme Lord of all the worlds -- he only, undeluded among men, is freed from all sins.

Chapter 10, Verse 3; Bhagavad Gita

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue No 14: January 2015

Temple Worship

We cannot create even a blade of grass. Therefore, if we offer anything to God, it is just for our own peace of mind and satisfaction. It is God who has given everything to us. So, if we eat food without offering it to Him, it is the greatest sign of ingratitude.

Page 2

Makar Sankranti Pongal Celebrations

Jan 17, 2015
Time: 10.30 am to 1.30 pm
110, Hapsburg Lane,
Lafayette, LA

Gayatri Havan, Sankranti
Pooja, Mahaprasad
Kite Festival
Pooja Sponsor: \$101

Page 2

Karma Yoga, The Yoga of Service

He is the wire-puller of the body. He should think that He works to carry out the Divine Will in the grand plan or scheme of things. He should consecrate all his actions at His Feet, whether they be good or bad.

Page 3

Swami Vivekananda



Page 4

Pongal/Makar Sankranti Significance

The day before Thai Pongal is known as Bogi Pandigai. On this day people clean their homes and light bonfire to discard unused items. In Punjab the same day is celebrated as Lohri by Sikh community.

Page 4

SANATAN HINDU



SANSKAR KENDRA
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Goddess Saraswati

Om Vaagdevyai namah

The Goddess of learning is called Saraswati because She gives (ti) the essence (saara) of our own Self (sva). She is the Shakti, the power and the consort, of Brahma the Creator. She is considered to be the personification of learning. She is the embodiment of Vidya (Education), Buddha (Intellect), Smriti (Memory), Jnaana (Knowledge) and Prajna (Wisdom). She is also familiarly called Veenaapaani, Vaagdevi and Shaarada.

Knowledge is opposite to ignorance is signified by dark color and knowledge by white. That is why She is depicted as pure white in color. She has four hands. She holds a rosary and a book in tow of Her hands, and a veena with Her other two hands.

Being the Goddess of learning, it is but proper that Saraswati holds a book in her hand. The book represents all areas of secular sciences. The even shows the need for the cultivation of fine arts. The rosary symbolizes all spiritual sciences.

Jaya jaya devi charaachara saare

kuchayuga shobita muktaahaare



veenaapustaka ranjitahaste

bhagavati bhaarati devi namaste.

Hail to Thee, Devi, who is the Essence of the universe, whose breasts are adorned with a garland of pearls, whose hands are fondling a veena, a book and who is Bagavati and Bhaarati Devi.

Yaa kundendu tushaarahaara dhavala
yaa subhra vastraavritaa
yaa veena varadanda manditakaraa
yaa shveta padmaasanaa
yaa brhmaachyuta shankara prabhritibhir
devaih sadaa vanditaa
saa maam paatu sarasvatee bhagavatee
nihshesha jaadyaapahaa.

Goddess Saraswati is all white like the kunda blossom, the moon, snow, and pearl. She is dressed in pure white. While two of Her hands play the veena, the two other hands are poised to give boons, and award punishments as needed. She is seated on a white lotus. She is ever worshipped by all the celestials including Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. May this Saraswati remove my obstacles and protect me.

-A prayer book for children



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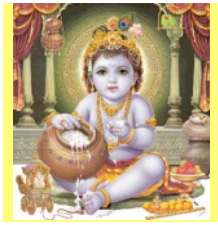
Sita Ram



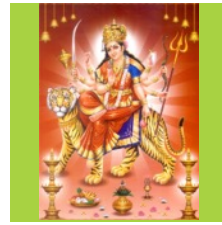
Ganesh



Krishna



Durga



Shiva



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Temple Worship - Part III

by H.H. Jagadguru Śrī Chandrasekarendra Saraswati Sankaracharya Swamigal of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam

In the olden days, they used to build the temple first and then the township grew around them. But nowadays, we build the township first and then only start thinking of constructing the temple. The offering of naivedyam to God and the offering of money into the hundis kept at the temples are all but a token of our gratitude to God for what he has done to us.

We cannot create even a blade of grass. Therefore, if we offer anything to God, it is just for our own peace of mind and satisfaction. It is God who has given everything to us. So, if we eat food without offering it to Him, it is the greatest sign of ingratitude. We have to offer the best to God and then take it. All may not be able to do puja and other things in their houses and offer all upacharas to God. Therefore, temples have been constructed for this purpose.

Some people have a doubt whether they should go to temples daily, or not. Of course, it is absolutely necessary to do so. In the olden days, people never used to have their food in their houses unless they heard the temple bell ringing at the time of the morning, noon, evening and night pujas to the Lord.

It is up to us therefore to nurture the divinity in the temples by ensuring that the pujas are performed properly and that the temple rituals are observed with diligence. We should see that the temple premises are kept clean and the deepa is lit every day. We should also see that the cloth that we offer to Lord is washed daily. If only we could ensure these things, automatically we shall be able to derive as much benefit, if not more, than what we get by the establishment of hospitals and other social welfare institutions.

Since a temple is a place of divinity, of course we have to observe certain rules while we are in the precincts of the temple. For instance, we should not use anything meant for God for ourselves.

We should not go to the temple in a purposeless manner. One should not pass urine or spit or excrete fecal matter within the temple premises and within the vicinity of the temples. Nor should one blow his nose or sneeze or chew pan in the temple, or eat fruits or food, or sleep or sit with stretched legs, or comb the hair or tie the hair after combing, wear cloth over the head and over the shoulders, tread over nirmalya or tread over the shadows of the flag staff, idols etc, nor should one touch the idols or those who do puja to the idols. No one should gossip, laugh loudly, or play games or go between the idol and the bali peetha.

As for pradakshina or going round the temple, one should not stop with just one or two rounds only but should go round at least thrice. One should not have darshan of the Lord at odd hours or at the time of abhisheka or naivedyam. One should not enter into the temple and worship when the deity is not in the straight position. One should not enter a temple by any passage other than the main gate.

One should not go empty-handed to a temple merely for seeing the karpura-harati. One should offer what one has brought to the priest, have darshan and return without showing his back to the Lord. With folded hands, and reciting stotras, one should perform pradakshinas ranging between 3 and 21 times, preferably in odd numbers. As for namaskarams, one should do it an odd number of times for Ishwara, ranging from 3 to 21, and for Devi four times. After namaskara, one should do pradakshina and then return home.

All these rules have been prescribed only for our welfare and to preserve the sanctity of the temples. It is up to us all to observe these rules, protect and nurture the sanctity of our temples, which have been the greatest heritage.

Jan 15 & Feb 15 Dates

Based on Lafayette, Louisiana, US Time

14 Wednesday	Pongal, Makar Sankranti
16 Friday	Shattila Ekadashi
20 Tuesday	Mauni Amavas
24 Saturday	Vasant Panchami
26 Monday	Ratha Saptami, Bhishma Ashtami
30 Friday	Jaya Ekadashi
03 Tuesday	Magha Purina
12 Thursday	Kumbha Sankranti
14 Saturday	Vijaya Ekadashi
15 Sunday	Vijaya Ekadashi

For more details please refer DrikPanchang.com

Makar Sankranti/Pongal Celebrations

January 17, 2015

Time: 10.30 am to 1.30 pm

Location: 110, Hapsburg Lane, Lafayette

Event Schedule:

Gayatri Havan, Sankranti Pooja

Mahaprasad, Kite Festival

Pooja Sponsor - \$101 per Family

Please RSVP to Srinivasan Ambatipati

@ 518-867-6645 or

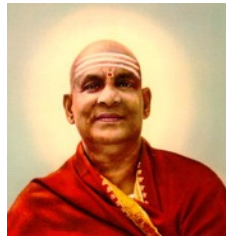
email to shskendra@gmail.com

Karma Yoga, The Yoga of Service

Part - II

by Swami Sivananda

If one lives with his Guru, he must be prepared to do willingly any work assigned to him. If you create interest in work which the mind revolts against, you later like to do any kind of work. By so doing, you will undoubtedly develop your will-power.



Balance of mind brings about real lasting happiness to a disciplined man. It is not a commodity which can be purchased on the market. It is indeed a rare gift which can only be attained by protracted

selfless service with Atma Bhava, equal vision, controlled Indriyas and self-restraint, by developing virtues such as adaptability, broad and generous tolerance and a high degree of endurance, serenity, calmness, control of temper and by removing anxieties, worries, fear and depression by spiritual Sadhana and meditation. It is serenity and balance of mind that can give real, eternal happiness to man. The wealth of the three worlds is nothing when compared to the bliss enjoyed by that great soul who has serenity and a balanced mind. Now, tell me honestly, where is bliss? Who is a great man? Is it in a wealthy king with an unbalanced and unbridled mind, living in a palace, or in a poor saint with a magnificent calm and balanced mind and living in a grass hut on the banks of the sacred Ganga?

If you want to serve another man truly, you should try to please him in all respects. You should not do anything that pleases you only. You should do such actions as can bring him immense happiness. This will constitute real service. But generally under the camouflage of serving others, people try to please themselves only. This is a serious mistake. He who gives the handle of a sharp knife to another to hold, holding the sharp blade himself does real service. A real Sevak rejoices in suffering. He takes on his shoulders the most responsible, difficult and the most arduous and uninteresting of works and kills his own little self just to please others. He willingly undergoes pain and suffering in order to serve and please others.

To stop the breath by means of Kumbhaka for two hours, to twirl the beads for twenty-four hours, to sit in Samadhi for forty days in an underground cellar without food by cutting the frenulum linguae of the tongue and practicing Khechari Mudra, to stand up on one leg in the scorching heat of the summer sun, to do Trataka on the sun at midday, to chant Om, Om, Om in silent and sequestered jungles, to shed an ocean of tears while doing Sankirtan—all these are of no avail unless one combines burning love for Him in all beings and a

fiery spirit of service in serving Him in all beings. Aspirants of the present-day are sadly lacking in these two indispensable qualifications. And that is the root cause why they do not make any headway at all in their meditation in solitude. They have not prepared the ground, I mean the Antahkarana, by protracted practice of love and service in the beginning. I have seen several Bhaktas in all my experiences of life in this line—Bhaktas who wear half a dozen rosaries around their necks and wrists, and mutter Hare Rama Hare Krishna day in and day out with a long Japa Mala in their hands. These Bhaktas will never approach a sick man even when he is in a dying condition and give him a drop of water or milk, and ask: "What do you want, brother? How can I serve you?" Out of curiosity they will be just looking at him from a distance. Can you call these people true Vaishnavites or Bhaktas? Can there be an iota



of real benefit in their meditation or Bhajan? A Jinda Narayana (living Narayana) in the form of a sick patient is in a dying state. They have not got the heart to go and serve him or even to speak a few kind and encouraging words at a critical juncture, when his life is trembling in the balance! How can they expect to have Darshan of that all-merciful Hari when they have hearts made of flint? How can they hope for God-realisation when they have not the eyes to see God in all beings and the spirit of service to serve Him in all these forms?

That man who has knowledge and devotion can alone do really efficient service to the country and the people. Jnana and Bhakti must be the rock bottom basis of Karma Yoga. Jnana can be combined with Karma Yoga, or Bhakti Yoga can be combined with Karma Yoga in the beginning with much advantage. The Jnana-Karma-Yogi thinks and feels that he is serving his own Atman and realises Advaitic consciousness. The Bhakti-Karma-Yogi thinks and feels that he is serving his Lord in all, his own Ishtam and realises God-consciousness and has Darshan of his Beloved. Mere philanthropical work out of sympathy without devotion and knowledge is nothing more than social scavenging. It is not Yoga or worship. It is on a lower plane. It cannot elevate a man much. The progress is dull and slow, if progress you can call it. Remember, it is the mental attitude or Bhava that does immense good.

A Karma Yogi who does all work in the form of worship of God in the beginning, who surrenders his body, mind, soul and all his actions as flowers or offerings at the Lotus Feet of the Lord, who is ever absorbed in the Lord by constant thought of God, loses himself in God-consciousness by total self-surrender. He gets absorbed in God. His will

becomes one with the Cosmic Will. That is his last and advanced stage. He realizes that whatever is going on in the world is but the Lila of the Lord or divine sporting. He realizes the truth of the utterances in the Brahma Sutras: Lokavattu lila kaivalyam. He feels that he is one with the Lord and that he is a partner in His Lila. He lives for Him only. He lives in Him only. His thoughts and actions are now of God Himself. The veil has dropped. The sense of separateness has been totally annihilated. He now enjoys the Divine Aishvarya.

A doctor who works in the hospital should think that all patients are manifestations of God. He should think that the body is the moving temple of God and that the hospital is a big temple or Brindavan or Ayodhya. He should think: "I am doing all my actions to please the Lord and not to please my superiors." He should think that God is the inner ruler (Antaryamin), that He alone manipulates all his organs from behind, and that He is the wire-puller of the body. He should think that He works to carry out the Divine Will in the grand plan or scheme of things. He should consecrate all his actions at His Feet, whether they be good or bad. He should then say: Om Tat Sat Krishnarpanamastu or Om Tat Sat Brahmarpanamastu in the end and at night when he retires to bed. This is Jnanagni or the fire of wisdom or the fire of devotion that destroys the fruit of action, brings about Chitta Suddhi, knowledge of the Self and final emancipation. He should never dream even: "I have done such meritorious acts. I will get an exalted place in Svarga, etc. I will be born in the next birth as a rich man." By means of constant practice of this nature he will slowly get mental non-attachment towards work. A lady, when she does her household duties, should also entertain the above mental attitude. In this manner all actions can be spiritualized. All actions will become worship of the Lord. A man can realize Godhead in whatever situation he may be placed in life, if only he works with this right mental attitude.



May the great Lord, the Flute-Bearer of Brindavan, the lover of Radha, the joy of Devaki, grant us right belief, Suddha Prem, right mental attitude and inner spiritual strength to do selfless service to the world, and to realize Godhead even while remaining in the world, by doing Nishkamya Karma Yoga with Narayana Bhava, by remembering Him at all times and by offering all actions, body, mind and the soul at His Lotus Feet! May the blessings of Siva and Hari be upon us all!

Swami Vivekananda

A spiritual genius of commanding intellect and power, Vivekananda crammed immense labor and achievement into his short life, 1863-1902. Born in the Datta family of Calcutta, the youthful Vivekananda embraced the agnostic philosophies of the Western mind along with the worship of science.

At the same time, vehement in his desire to know the truth about God, he questioned people of holy reputation, asking them if they had seen God. He found such a person in Sri Ramakrishna, who became his master, allayed his doubts, gave him God vision, and transformed him into sage and prophet with authority to teach.

After Sri Ramakrishna's death, Vivekananda renounced the world and criss-crossed India as a wandering monk. His mounting compassion for India's people drove him to seek their material help from the West. Accepting an opportunity to represent Hinduism at Chicago's Parliament of Religions in 1893, Vivekananda won instant celebrity in America and a ready forum for his spiritual teaching.

For three years he spread the Vedanta philosophy and religion in America and England and then returned to India to found the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Exhorting his nation to spiritual greatness, he awakened India to a new national consciousness. He died July 4, 1902, after a second, much shorter sojourn in the West. His lectures and writings have been gathered into nine volumes.

Some quotes from Swami Vivekananda

"In a day, when you don't come across any problems - you can be sure that you are travelling in a wrong path"

"We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live; they travel far. "

"Comfort is no test of truth. Truth is often far from being comfortable."

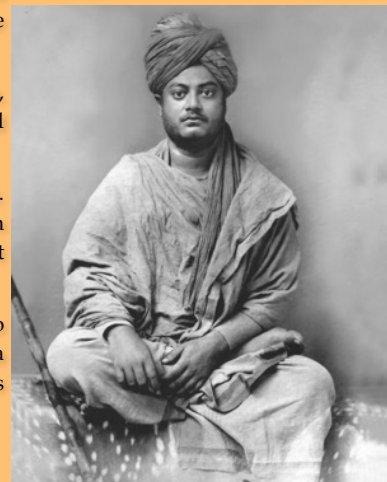
"Ask nothing; want nothing in return. Give what you have to give; it will come back to you, but do not think of that now."

"Learn Everything that is Good from Others, but bring it in, and in your own way absorb it; do not become others."

"Do one thing at a Time, and while doing it put your whole Soul into it to the exclusion of all else."

"The greatest sin is to think yourself weak"

"You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul."



Pongal/Makar Sankranti

Pongal is a Hindu festival which is observed by people of Tamil Nadu. Pongal is a four days festival and the most important day of Pongal is known as Thai Pongal. Thai Pongal which is the second day of the four days festivity is also celebrated as Sankranti. The same day is observed as Makar Sankranti in North Indian states when people take holy dip in river Ganges.

The day before Thai Pongal is known as Bogi Pandigai. On this day people clean their homes and light bonfire to discard unused items. In Punjab the same day is celebrated as Lohri by Sikh community.

Thai Pongal day is celebrated by cooking freshly harvested rice with fresh milk and jaggery in a new clay pot. While boiling the concoction, people let the milk spill over the pot as an auspicious sign of material abundance and prosperity. Later the concoction of rice, milk and jaggery, known as Pongal, is topped with brown sugar, Ghee, cashew nuts and raisins. Freshly cooked Pongal is first offered to the Sun God as a gratitude for good harvesting and later served on banana leaves to the people present in the home for the ceremony. Traditionally Pongal is cooked at sunrise at an open place.

Thai Pongal is the first day of Thai month according to Tamil Solar Calendar. Thai is the



tenth solar month in Tamil Calendar. Thai Masam is known as Makar in other Hindu calendars.

Next day of Thai Pongal is known as Mattu Pongal. Cattles are decorated and worshipped on Mattu Pongal day. The last and final day of Pongal is known as Kaanum Pongal. It is time for family reunions in Tamil Nadu. In a nutshell Pongal celebration is a way of thanking Sun God Surya and cattles who helped farmers in agriculture. It is similar to Thanksgiving day in USA. Food offered to god on this day are Pongal (rice and jaggery from new harvest with milk), pumpkin and plantain curries.

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Makar Sankranti Muhurta

January 14, 2015

Punya Kaal Muhurta = 08:04 to 17:24

Duration = 9 hours 20 minutes

Sankranti Moment = 08:04

Mahapunya Kaal Muhurta = 08.04 to 08:28

Duration = 23 minutes

Timings for Lafayette, Louisiana, USA



Wish You All
A
Very Happy
and
Prosperous
Makar
Sankranti

Thank you for your support and blessings.

Srinivasan Ambatipati, Editor