Sri Chakra

The Source of the Cosmos

The Journal of the Sri Rajarajeswari Peetam, Rush, NY

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June 2010

June Newsletter

Since the last issue...

Aiya and Amma did a host of activities over the past three months. There was a workshop in Philadephia on Lord Shiva worship, as well as a practical demonstration of the Ekadasa Rudra homam in Pickering, Ontario. Around that time as well, Aiya flew to Cleveland, Ohio to do a cremation and subsequent punyajalam (the final-day puja), and later performed the same sequence of events in New York.

In mid-March, the temple conducted the 2nd of two Shivarathris that fell this year, which is a very rare occurrence. The reason for this is that Shivarathri always falls during the Tamil month of Maasi over the thithis of triyodasi and chaturdasi, which are the 13th and 14th days of the fortnight.

This year, as Aiya explained, the triyodasi fell in February (which is not the month of Maasi) and the chaturdasi continued only in the following month of March. Hence, Aiya and other people around the world who also understand how to follow the panchaangam calendar performed Shivarathri twice. Interestingly, this splitting (or doubling) of Shivarathri also happened during the time of Krishna and the Pandavas of the Mahabharata. In that instance, Krishna also chose to perform two

Shivarathris in accordance with the proper thithis in the proper months.

For the first Shivarathri on February 11, Aiya and the temple volunteers did an Ekadasa Rudra homam, which wrapped up around 5 a.m. the next morning to conform with the calendar. The March 13 Shivarathri saw the usual Ekadasa Rudra parayanam performed throughout the night, with different volunteers sitting at all 11 Shivalingam "stations" set up around the inner temple and yajnashala.

Around the same time the Shivarathris were done, Aiya and Amma were invited to Forzheim, Germany, where the local devotees have built a temple with the same Vedic and architectural principles as our temple in Rochester. There, they were performing a 1008 shanka abhishekam. As well, a 24-hour Sri Suktam homam was done, followed by abhishekam and alankaram for the Devi there. April saw Aiya stay close to home, as he officiated over the pujas during Tamil New Year's on the 13th, and the subsequent annual Pratyangira Devi homam on the 18th. He also helped devotees perform the Chitra Poornima puja for their departed mothers on April 27. Aiya and Amma traveled again in mid-May with a trip to North Carolina to visit the devotees there and conduct the usual round of talks and workshops. Whenever they had a moment at home, they were with the local devotees preparing for the Maha Kumbhabhishekam to take place July 1 to 14.

Past Events

Maha Shivarathri, March 13

Maha Shivarathri marked the second of the two Shivarathri's in this year's calendar. This night also included pujas to shiva lingams in eight directions around the homa kundam. Aiya performed a Rudra homam, and then everyone joined in the complete Eka Dasa Rudra parayanam. This was done by chanting 11 Rudra Namakams with each of the 11 Chamakam paragraphs placed in between.

Everyone present circumambulated the yajna shala and the temple, offering bilva leaves and rudrakshas at each lingam. The night ended around 5 a.m. and everyone partook of maha prasadam.

Left: The pradosham lingam was covered in bilva leaves
Right: Devotees offered trays of bilvam just like this all night long.

Maha Pratyangira homam, April 18

The annual Maha Pratyangira homam was held the weekend following the Tamil New Year. Devotees prepared various sweets and short eats for Pratyangira Devi, and everyone there was given a few palaharams to put into the homam.

The sponsors offered several buckets of chilies into the fire as Aiya led the yajnashala in the chanting of the Maha Pratyangira mantra, along with the Shoolini Durga mantra. After the homam, bali was offered at Bhairava, and all the devotees enjoyed prasadam and the remaining bakshanam from the homam.

Tamil New Year's, April 13

A surprising number of people showed up for the Tuesday evening festivities—over 100 people, which is much more than the temple gets on a typical weeknight.

The center hall area was set up with a full kolam, special puja tray and metal pot in which sakkarai pongal was made throughout the puja. While waiting for the milk to boil, Aiya read the upcoming year's forecast, indicating that it would be a very favourable year for world markets, children's education and general health among other things.

Everyone had a chance to offer grains and rice into the pongal pot, and everyone was later given that special pongal as prasadam.

Above: A long line waits to put grains into the pongal; Right: The tray is set up with items like gold and silver flowers, fruits, money, and even a Shivalingam.

Chitra Poornima, April 27

Those doing tarpanam for their departed mothers gathered on this day. After a brief puja, the pindams and black sesame seeds they made to represent the physical body were given into the waters of Kashi, pictured above.

Clockwise from left: Aiya pours the festival kalasam onto the sponsors when the homam concludes; the purnahuti is offered into the fire; devotees gather outside to watch how Aiya offers the final bali.

Upcoming Events

Maha Kumbhabhishekam, July 1-11

The planning for this historic event has been going on for no less than two years. In fact, it was at May Festival 2008 that Aiya asked temple regulars and visitors alike to start learning how to chant the Rudram and perform homam.

Every day will see 11 Rudra homams performed at 121 homakundams. Sponsorships are still (scarcely) available but those thinking about sponsoring should call ahead of time as the tight planning will make it difficult to arrange walk-in sponsorships. The same applies for volunteers, who will need to undergo some regular training before the event—it will simply be too large and complicated for devotees to volunteer without previously knowing the layout of the temple and various items.

Temple volunteers have been working around the clock to prepare. We implore one and all to come to at least a few days of the festival, as a Rudra homam on this scale has never been attempted before anywhere in the world.

Clockwise from top right: Bharhavi mixes a batch of samit that will be used in the homams; lockers and other storage units are assembled; as many as 1008 kalasams must be strung for kumbhabhishekam; the land on the temple's north side has been leveled and ready to build 121 homakundams; the Bhairava shrine went from a simple trisulam under a tree to a full-fledged village-style shrine.

Guru Poornima, July 25

Last Guru Poornima, Aiya created a bit of a stir by not assigning any specific person or people to be in charge of this year's event. He implored all the temple's visitors and family to work together to make this year's festivities a success.

Aadi Amavasya, Aug. 9

This day is when those who have lost their fathers perform tarpanam for them. However, it is only necessary to offer tarpanam on this day if one has missed doing so on his or her father's very own *thithi* (the fortnight day of the appropriate month) or does not know the father's correct *thithi*.

The same principle is also true for Chitra Poornima, which also acts as a type of default day to do one's mother's tarpanam.

Please call the temple for details at the phone number at the bottom of this page, and reserve a spot if you wish to participate in this concise but important puja.

Aadi Puram, Aug. 11

An early-morning Chandi homam usually marks the beginning of this day, and is followed by the abhishekam of the Vana Durga murthi with milk and grass.

As this day celebrates the Devi first becoming a woman, there is also a small procession, not to mention the offering of numerous sweets and treats.

Varalakshmi Vratam, Aug. 20

Married women gather to perform a deepam puja with their own hands on this day, guided with step-by-step instructions by Aiya. Varalakshmi puja always falls on a Friday night and the temple celebrations begin around 7 p.m.

More and more ladies have been taking part in this puja with each successive year, so it is very important to call the temple and book a sponsorship early. Because of the space the volunteers, sponsors and puja trays will take, the temple usually caps this festival with about 50 to 60 sponsors.

Our deepest thanks and gratitude to this issue's volunteers: Guruji, Aiya, Vilas Ankolekar, Gratus Devanesan, B. Jayaraman, Sudha Priya Kearney, Pamela Lang and Bharhavi Selvan.

In Three Months

Devi willing, the next issue of the *Sri Chakra* will be up on the temple's website at the beginning of September 2010.

This magazine cannot keep publishing without contributions! Articles, poems, stories and photos about any spiritual topic are welcomed.

The next deadline for article submission is August 11. Please e-mail us with your contributions or feedback about this issue at sri_chakra_mag@srividya.org or talk to Kamya or Abhi at the temple.

Sri Gurubhyo Namaha!

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Kumbhabhishekam Update

The Sri Rajarajeswari Peetam will be hosting its Punarutharuna Kumbhabhishekam July 1-11, 2010.

A massive Ati Rudra homam will happen over 11 days, with 11 Rudra homams performed daily in each of 121 homakundams.

There are less than 7 weeks until Maha Kumbabhishekam and preparations are well underway. All kalasams have been washed and strung, more than 7,000 prasadam packages have been packed, all puja trays have been counted and separated, and several barrels of homam samagri have been mixed.

But there is still much work to do! Many projects still need to be completed in the next month. Volunteers poured in during the training weekends and learned how to set up puja and homam, as well as where all items in the temple are located.

There is still time to get involved. Please go to the website and fill out the volunteer form! While formal training has concluded, temple volunteers are always willing to share their knowledge. If you have any questions regarding volunteering or sponsoring the homam, please contact the temple.

Just one Rudra homam is proven to permanently eliminate all planetary doshams (i.e. Sani, Rahu, Kethu, etc.) for oneself and one's children. For more information and how to sponsor, please sign up at www.atirudram.com.

Kumbhabhishekam sponsors are still welcome! Please go to www.srividya.org for full details.

Q & Aiya

We all love hanging out with Aiya, drinking tea, and sometimes getting some guidance on how to travel down our own paths to the Devi. After a Rudra Homam workshop conducted at the temple, Aiya implored those who attended—whether old or new students—to clear their doubts about the ritual.

Q: Can we do Ekadasa Rudra homam at home?

Aiya: You can if you want to, but it'll burn you out.

Q: If we do it at home, should we do one stanza of the Chamakam for each Namakam that is chanted?

Aiya: This is the stanza we usually do—the 3rd *anuvakam* from the Chamakam that goes, "Sancha me, mayascha me priyancha me, nukaamascha me kaamascha me…" But that's only when we're chanting Rudram once, like during Saturday puja. During Ekadasa Rudram, each full Namakam will be chanted with an anuvakam of the Chamaka, going from the first to the eleventh. Every day of kumbhabhishekam, that's what we'll do.

Q: You say that we should do "sancha me mayascha me" for the one Namakam that we chant, but why is it that we chant that anuvakam at the beginning *and* end of the Namakam during Saturday puja? Does it throw off the balance when you chant it twice like that?

Aiya: We do it twice like that because that anuvakam is also called the Rudra Shanti. Also when you're doing the Ekadasa Rudra homam, it'll come twice—once between the 3rd and 4th Rudram, and then again during the vasodhara (the stream of ghee going into the fire during the final offering). For vasodhara you have to chant the entire Chamakam in one shot.

Q: Will bad things happen if you make a mistake while chanting or doing puja?

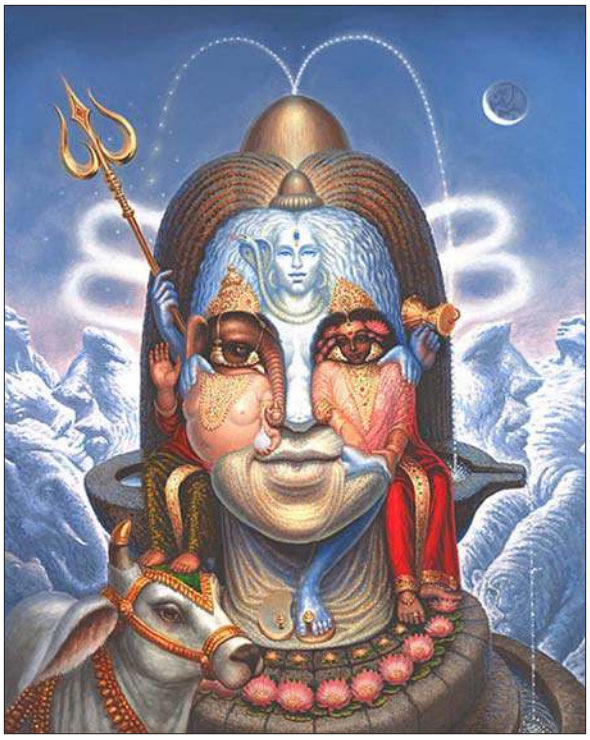
Aiya: Only if you're afraid that something bad is going to happen, then you're inviting it. If you say, "Amma, I'm your child, I don't know anything but I want to do this. If I make a mistake, please forgive me." But that doesn't mean you can be careless during puja. That's why I said to Kumaran… when he was doing the homam for 45 days alone in his home, there was no one else there sometimes. He had to make sure everything was in reach and not break the continuity of the ritual.

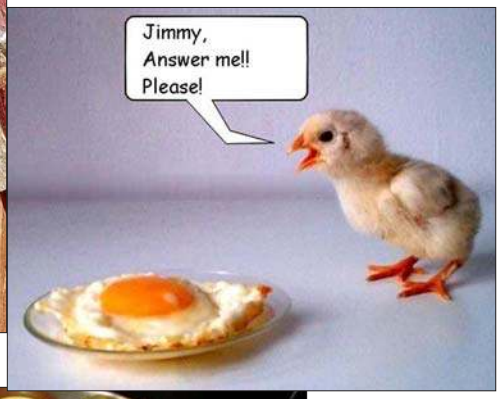
Q: What if you can't be in the same place every day to do puja?

Aiya: Wherever you are, if you concentrate on your ajna chakra while you're doing any japam or puja, you are in the exact same place every day.

Q: The homakundam in the Stroudsberg, PA temple has a triangle on top of a square… is that okay?

Aiya: They can have any type of homakundam they want. If they want to do it that way, let them. But Amma, it's not enough to have a yoni-shaped homakundam for a Sri Vidya upasaka. If you're going to have that, it has to be a proper Tantrik homakundam, and the most experienced people must be performing the homam. This type of thing is like a Formula-1 racecar… what use is giving it to someone who's just learning how to drive?





Q: What restrictions are there when you take Sri Vidya diksha (initiation with a mantra under a guru)?

Aiya: There's only one major restriction under our parampara, and that's to never cut sugarcane because that's one of the four things Devi is holding in her hands.

Q: But for eating, what should we avoid? Meat? Eggs?

Aiya: Oh, there we pretty much avoid everything! Definitely no meat, but eating eggs for us is like eating the whole chicken. It's still animal protein—after all, what else is an egg but an unfertilized baby chick? Do you know how it works for all of us here? If we go inside a store and pick up a box of cookies, the first thing we'll do is look at the list of ingredients. If it has eggs or any other animal-based product (i.e. lard, egg protein, gluten, etc.) we'll put it back. But you know, it's very easy… I have survived 38 years since I left my home country, and I have always been a vegetarian. No problem.

Temple Lore

How I Met My Guru Part 3

by Sudha Priya Kearney

In the last two issues of the Sri Chakra, Sudha Priya Kearney wrote of her divine experiences in the time leading upto her introduction to Aiya and the temple. It started with her initiation into the Kriya meditation of Paramahamsa Yogananda, and later led to receiving mantra diksha from Aiya after Shivarathri 1993. However, she didn't yet feel like he was her guru. But she must have changed her mind since she has been with the temple for over 15 years. This is the 3rd and last part of her story.

At home I told my mother I got mantras from Aiya and that he had invited me to attend a function at the temple in May. My mother was so very happy for me. She said I had found my living guru. I told her I did not consider Aiya my guru and he himself had said I did not have to think of him as my guru, but my mother insisted he was my guru. I asked her what about Yogananda?

My mother reminded me that I had not received the Kriya meditation techniques directly from Yogananda since he had left his body before I was born. She said I was very blessed and fortunate to have met my "living guru" and to have personally received mantra diksha from him. I asked her what about all the talk about having only one guru? My mother responded with a story about Dattatreya Bhagwan who had some 21 or so gurus.

She said one can learn from a lot of people and many of them could be considered gurus but in this instance since Aiya had given me mantra diksha without my asking for it he was now my guru. Right away my mother decided both my sisters along with their children would go with us to Aiyaji's temple in May. (Gujarati's and most North Indians add a "ji" to a person's name as a form of respect)

My parents' guru was a renunciate who did not talk to or go near women, so my mother had always just seen her guru from a distance. At the Swaminarayan temple we attended in India the women generally had to stay back while the priest performed the puja and could barely see the rituals from a distance. So when we went to Aiya's temple in May and we were allowed to personally go up to the murthis, do abhishekam, and actually touch the deities, my mother was so very happy. This was such a rare opportunity and such a great privilege.

As part of the consecration ceremony for the Pramana Meru we stayed up all night taking turns to hold strings that were connected to the Meru and chanted our personal mantras. Aiya performed a long and elaborate puja. The chanting was so very complicated that it was all just a blur to me. At some point the Lalita Sahasranamam was chanted and that too sounded awesome but was also very new to me that I could barely follow along.

The one word out of the thousand that I could actually pronounce was Yogananda (in my mind that was so cool at the time that my Self Realization Fellowship guru's name was included!). After the puja we were all allowed to put some kumkum on the Meru and do namaskaram to Devi.

My mother was so happy to be able to touch the Meru and be able to talk to Aiya. I remember Aiya had sung bhajans that night and we were so touched that along with a lot of bhajans in Tamil he included one in Sanskrit for "Narayana." We worshipped all the Hindu deities but Narayana was the main deity in our home temple and I personally had always been very fond of Krishna.

After the puja we all did namaskaram to Aiya and Amma and then had dinner, and along with the other disciples sat and listened to Aiya. A lot of the talk was in Tamil but every so often Aiya would speak in English or specifically translate some of the conversation for us. I don't remember any specifics but I do remember feeling very happy and felt so very much at home at this temple.

Later, Aiya called me and gave me the book that was published specially for this Murthi Pramana Mahameru Prathishta occasion. It was the English version of the *Sri*

Chakra Puja vidhanam book that earlier was only available in Tamil.

As we were taking his leave Aiya suddenly said he would come to our house to do a puja. We were very happy but also very concerned that we did not do any fancy pujas like him so we did not have any of the items at home. He said not to worry he would bring all the things he needed for Puja with him along with a few of his disciples. He gave us a date sometime in summer and there was a burst of questions in Tamil that sounded like protests from some of his disciples to whom he replied in Tamil.

Sudha and her husband, Mike, are both long-time SV upasakas.

Looking at the confusion on my face, one young man informed me in English that all the questions were about why is Aiya planning to do a puja in my house when a few of them had been asking Aiya to come to their house for quite some time and he had not been able to do so because of his busy schedule. We then realized how truly blessed we were that Aiyaji would be coming to our house to perform a puja.

On a warm weekend in June or July of 1993 Aiya came to my sister's house where I was staying and did a puja. A lot of his disciples from Buffalo and Boston attended the puja along with a lot of our friends in Connecticut. I had met Mike (my future husband) at an SRF retreat and had mentioned to him about Aiya.

Mike had immediately decided he too wanted to meet Aiya so I invited him to attend the puja. Mike had also come to help us the day before with the dinner preparations for about 70 guests. After the puja Mike asked Aiya for a mantra, and since Aiya was going to spend the night at our home he asked Mike to come the next morning.

Later, Mike told me that it was a test for him. He had planned to attend a bike race the day of the puja, and he had to make a choice. He chose to come see Aiya and received mantra diksha. Mike had no second thoughts about accepting Aiya as his guru even though he too was studying the SRF lessons and practicing the meditation techniques. I was still thinking of Aiya as a good friend and father figure but not as my guru.

I had seen Aiya on three occasions and soon it was time to attend the Guru Poornima festival at the temple. My mother had decided to accompany me to the temple again since she knew I was still not sure he was my guru. When I said I don't know what I need to do for Guru Poornima she said just follow along and do exactly what she does at the temple, and I agreed.

When we arrived at Aiya's house the shrine had been set up for puja and two regal seats were set up for Aiya and Amma. The puja was done to Aiya and Amma and we were all asked to form a line so each person could personally wash their feet and do namaskaram to them.

I got behind my mother and watched very carefully what she did. She took some water and sprinkled it on Aiya's feet and offered her pranaams and then to my amazement she took a little water from the tray that his feet were in and reverently drank the water. Next was my turn so I did the same. Since there were a lot of people in line behind us we left the shrine room and I reflected on the part where I had washed Aiya's feet and drank the water.

Years ago on another occasion my father had brought home water after washing their Guru's feet and mother had accepted it with such reverence and delight, but I had refused it and said it was yucky and did not take it. It was interesting to me that I did not feel it yucky to drink the water after washing Aiya's feet. But anyway I still did not consider him my guru. But I thought for a priest he was really quite a regular guy and kind of cool too! Both Aiya and my mother were extremely patient with me.

Since I was not sure about accepting Aiya as my guru I posed a test for him one day in my naivety. I asked Aiya to tell me whom I had met in Sri Nagar in 1984 and immediately Aiya said I had met Babaji. I was amazed that he would know this! I had never mentioned to Aiya or anyone at the temple about Babaji giving me a lotus garland in Sri Nagar and Aiya just like that told me I had met Babaji and added that the same Babaji is in his Sri Vidya lineage. ***(he's known as Katambari Baba, as described in the March 2009 Sri Chakra –ed)***

The Mother of all Families

by Pamela Lang

Whenever I have been asked about how I came to be Hindu, I always say how it was just meant to be. I try to explain to people the mysterious and wonderful chain of events that led me to the temple. Looking back, it was clearly Divine handiwork.

An astounding number of years ago I began to feel an urge to be closer to God. I was raised Catholic so I tried to start reading the Bible and attend Mass again—something I had not done in a long time. I remember staring at a picture of Jesus in my parent's house and hoping I would get a clue of what it was all about. But nothing happened with all of this and I still felt like I had not found what I was searching for. I didn't know what it was but I knew I did not have it.

That was the first thing. Well, really the second thing because from my earliest memories I was always fascinated with Eastern cultures and loved Indian food. I used to daydream about archeology as a kid. These tendencies were totally alien to my all-American and very Western family.

At that time I was in my early twenties. Can you believe it? I had lived all that time not knowing the Mother at all. Aiya often spoke of how long he had to wait to be able to learn this so I guess I was lucky it only took that long. Of course as it turns out, it is still taking a long time but that is a story for another day. But the paper... the infamous college paper. That little gem was a source of amusement at Park Circle for years and also my ticket into Sri Vidya.

Despite living in Arizona, Pam's love for the temple pulled her back to Rochester, where she and her husband, Steve, were married by Aiya in 2005.

I was attending Monroe Community College at the very same time Saru (Aiya's daughter) and Lily were, though I didn't know them then. There was this very popular professor of anthropology and he taught a world religion class that was always booked solid. When I learned of it I had to get in. I just felt a strong need to take that class.

The details are fuzzy now but someone must have backed out at the last minute because I got a spot, and midway through the term one of our assignments was to select a non-Western religion to write about. Naturally, I wanted to learn about Hinduism but I had absolutely no idea where to look. All I knew of India was the Raj Mahal restaurant on Monroe Ave.

I got the idea to ask my philosophy professor if he could point me in the right direction, because those guys are always very helpful, and he mentioned there was a student he could put me in touch with whose father had a temple in his garage. They conducted fire ceremonies there. Now when I heard that, I tried to picture what a temple in a garage with fire pits could possibly look like. I wasn't sure it sounded totally legitimate but it definitely was interesting.

No one was home when I called so I left a message about who I was and whether I could come and observe? I think Aiya called me back later that night. I remember sitting at the kitchen table talking to him for the first time. The exact conversation is lost to me now but I do know that he was so warm and accommodating I really wanted to meet him.

Saru prepped me a little before I went, and mentioned that they sit on the floor. She told me there was a Thursday night abhishekam and a Friday night puja and I should come to both because they were different. She mentioned something about what to wear, skirt or pants but something comfortable because we'd be sitting for so long.

I can't believe it now, but I showed up in an ankle-length black leather skirt and didn't realize until I got there that that wouldn't work. Saru very kindly let me borrow something of hers for the night to substitute.

Catch the second half of Pam's story in the next issue of the Sri Chakra.

Below the surface of Chamakam

by Gratus Devanesan

I often hear and read that Chamakam is the selfish act of asking Lord Shiva for personal boons. We may be selfish, but to imagine that the Vedas allow room for selfishness, and to think that prayers are revealed to great rishis for the sake of selfishness, is in my opinion, short sighted.

In my experience and understanding, the Vedas give no room, nor significance, to selfish desires and wants. If the Chamakam were an expression of wants – then it would read "us" not "me" – it would say give "us" this, not give me, give me, give me, etc.

It is therefore my interest to explore Chamakam from a different point of view.

Let's look at a simple translation of the 3rd anuvakam of Chamakam:

Pleasures of this world are with me,
Pleasures of other world are with me,
Liking is with me,
The desire due to that is with me,
The result of the desire is with me,
Relatives sweet to the mind are with me,
Security is with me,
Great fame is with me,
Good habitats are with me,
All good luck is with me,
All wealth is with me,
Teacher showing the way is with me,
One who carries me like father is with me,
Protection of assets is with me,
Courage is with me,
Good to all are with me,
Reward is with me,
Knowledge of Vedas and science is with me,
Capacity to teach is with me,
Capacity to order is with me,
Capacity to get work done is with me,
Wealth of cattle is with me,
Destruction of blocks in my path are with me,
Fire sacrifices and other good deeds are with me,
The good result of such action is with me,
Freedom from tuberculosis is with me,
Freedom from small fevers are with me,
The medicine for life without sickness is with me,
Long life is with me,
The state of all people being my friends is with me,
Absence of fear is with me,
Good conduct is with me,
Good sleep is with me,
Good mornings are with me,
Good days are with me,
And all these are with me

The translator in this case chose to say "are with me." If you look at the word "cha," much like the Latin "que," it reflects close association. So a *{something} came* could poetically be translated as *{something} should be granted to me*, or like in the above translation *{something} is with me*.

Both are flawed in my opinion, because they start from a point of view of physical proximity and objectification.

Cha simply implies closeness – like the relationship between darkness and black. It is we that assume there is a physical object, an object separate from us, that must be brought close to us – so that we may possess it. The idea that A is separate from B is natural in us, but the idea that all is one, is natural in the Vedas. The Vedas and the Tantras, as far as I understand, are not about attachment, possessiveness or control. So how can the crown jewel of the Vedas be all about possessing and controlling?

We should stop looking at things from our limited point of view and accept the Vedas as a force for good. We should take some things *apriori* when interpreting the Vedas. The Vedas do not talk about our mundane lives. How small and silly is it to believe that the Vedas talk about success in business? Would a timeless truth revealed to rishis, talk about business success? Yes, knowledge from the Vedas can be applied to management and economics – but to imagine that the Vedas themselves talk about our mundane day to day affairs is to give way too great significance to ourselves.

Second, the Vedas are timeless truths so we should look at timeless concepts when interpreting them. The Tantras often speak of sex. Why? Because that is the only process that is completely universal. It is the basis of life and continuation and it is the timeless origin of all life. Similarly, we need to look beyond and look at timeless concepts when trying to understand Vedic texts.

Watch for the 2nd part of this article in the September issue of the Sri Chakra.

RUDRAM

The most beneficial prayer in the Vedas

by Sri B. Jayaraman

Sri Matha, the first nama of Sri Lalita Sahasranamam is interpreted as "shruthi matha" or "veda matha" as one of its many meanings. Even before the origin of space and time, i.e. before the origin of origin itself, a spandha in universal consciousness *(Nirguna Brahman)* caused an outburst of sound. As per our shastras, "sabda prapancham" manifested itself into "artha prapancham." In this article we will not go into details of prapancha srishti.

By the unbounded grace of Sri Matha Lalita, the primordial divine sabdam manifested itself into "matrukasharam," which is the Mother of alphabets; and as "veda matha," which refers to padams and riks (mantras). Sages who sat in deep meditation in unison with nirguna brahman discovered the powerful riks/mantras. Sri Rudram is a prayer to Lord Shiva containing 164 riks in 27 stanzas (during homa the 164 riks are expanded into 169 riks). The sage who discovered these riks is "agora rishi." Now let us look into what makes this Rudram as a powerful prayer and what it will do to all of us who chant, as well to all of mankind.

All our actions or inactions that benefit others are called dharmic actions and we get "punya" as a result. Similarly, all actions/inactions that harm others are "adharmic" and we get "paapam" as a result. Paapam and punya are cumulative. Vedas are the commands of Lord Shiva and based on vedic dictum, shastras determine what is dharmic and what is adharmic. Naturally, we get rewarded with materialistic pleasures for punya and punished with pain and suffering for paapam by Lord Shiva. This is the supreme natural law of prakruthi, or niyathi of nature.

According to the Vedas, Lord Shiva with His benevolent power (anugraha shakti) creates the devatas (Shiva ganas) for joy, success, shraddha, medha and so on. Lord Shiva with His controlling power creates Shiva ganas called Rudras for pain, suffering, loss, anger etc.

The Vedas themselves have a form and affection of the universal Mother. Hence, out of apaara karuna (unbounded compassion) the Vedas teach us prayers for all types of Shiva ganas.

In fact, the Vedas adopt the same tactful technique which our own mother adopts. When the father gets angry with his child for the harm he caused to other children and punishes him for the wrong he did, what does the mother do? She tactfully advises the child to ask for pardon and beg the mercy of his father and assures him that he will not repeat this wrong in the future. The mother does not take either the side of father or child and remains neutral, but out of motherly affection advises the child so that his pain and sufferings are reduced or eliminated.

That is what is exactly what the Vedas do in the 11 chapters of Rudram mantras. The riks make us to do namaskarams again and again. We bow to everything of Rudra devata—we bow to his dhanus, to the arrows, to his hands that hold the bow, etc. Will the father go on punishing the child once it knows its mistake and asks for mercy?

That is what exactly happens with the chanting of Rudram.

Not only do our sufferings and pain stop, our punishment is also lessened. Just as the father who was angry while punishing the child, suddenly becomes happy and gives gifts once the child asks for pardon, similarly Rudra Ganas who were angry suddenly turn graceful and grant you whatever boons you ask for. Rudra ganas like Lord Shiva Himself are "aasu thoshi." We can easily get rid of their anger and please them with just chanting Rudram and offering namaskarams.

With vathsalyam and out of abundant compassion the Vedas have specified everything you are able to ask from Rudra ganas once they are pleased with your chanting of Namaka mantras. These items are called chamakams. They specify all your wants for day-to-day life. The idea is that you will not have to do anything adharmic for your basic wants of life. That is why rishis have intelligently specified the riks of the Chamakam to be chanted immediately after chanting the Namakam.

Thus, chanting of Rudram riks is the easiest way suggested by Veda Matha to get rid of our paapas and the effects of papas, namely pain and suffering. The technique of getting rid of accumulated sins is called "prayaschittha." During the course of life we commit sins both inevitably and inadvertently. Ergo, the shastras specify daily prayaschittha, annual prayaschittha, special prayaschittham on attaining the age of 60 years, and so on. In all these prayaschittha prayogas chanting, abhishekam and homams with Rudra mantras are invariably specified.

Thus, having understood the greatness and importance of Sri Rudram for individuals, let us look into the appropriateness of Sri Rudra Homa during great ceremonies like Kumbhabhishekam etc.

Human beings have well developed six senses and also a faculty of mind and intellect, which can be cultivated and expanded to very great heights. With such extended capabilities of mind and intellect, humans rule over the animal kingdom and extract benefits from nature far in excess of their requirements. They forcefully create an imbalance in nature by extracting much more than what nature can regenerate by itself. Although nature is very patient, once the limit is exceeded, Rudra ganas violently react through nature with calamities like earthquakes, wild fires, climate change, etc. The vedas describe the anger of the Rudras as such:

Ugra cha Bheema cha, Ushna cha,
Cheetha cha, Ethe agnischa Goraaha…

In such calamities, unfortunately and inevitably some good people also suffer. Sri Rudra mantras contain lot of powerful "prarthana mantras" with namaskarams. The mantras seek the blessings of the Rudras for the benefit of all of mankind. Upasakas can pray for the benefit of mankind as such, so that the anger of the Rudras are pacified. With the blessings of Shiva, adharmic acts in society will get reduced and the earth will become a better place to live in.

The purpose of any temple is to provide an opportunity for the general public to visit, pray and attain peace and prosperity. Hence in such Kumbhabhisheka ceremonies we assemble in large numbers and perform Rudra japa and homa in such large ahutis (the number of offerings into the fire), so that the anger of the Rudras with mankind is pacified.

Sri Rajarajeswari Peetam has organized such a large scale "Ati Rudram" with attention to every minute detail. When a large number of devotees assemble with sincere bhakti, sincerity of purpose (shraddha), faith, belief and enthusiasm for Rudra homam, it is only natural that Sri Shiva and Rajarajeswari Devi with all other devatas will be invoked in a blissful and graceful manner.

Let us participate in the homa, with *vishwaprem* in fulfillment of our responsibility towards our society, and let us receive the blessings for our own prosperity and universal welfare and peace.

Sahasra Chandi Yajna

at Devipuram

Devi's blessings to all of you!

Our purpose is to manifest a better life for you and others around you by shifting your focus to a concern for others. Spiritual evolution starts happening then. It makes your environment support you. Your life becomes that much easier, healthier and better.

Our goal is to give you a better life and to make you a teacher to help others. We connect you to the Power which unfolds your new life. Live wisely with ethical values. Rid of your stresses, you will enjoy an improved quality of life.

In your own body, billions of cells work seamlessly to open up a higher level of consciousness. The individual cells surrender parts of themselves to create you, a better life-form than themselves.

We should do something about promoting the best of homas and honouring the Goddess. Besides, Hindu dharma was founded on homas even when there were no temples, no priests. Good karma means homa, a sacrifice of a part of your self-ego. It serves all without expecting any return. Empowerment takes place through the navel chakra of fire. Havan is the means.

In the Bhagavad Gita, it is said: You have only the right to do an action. It may or may not produce results. If it does, well and good; if not, your payoff is already there because you enjoyed doing what you wanted to do.

We just give, because we love them. The necessary and sufficient condition for motivation to continue in spite of repeated failures is that we do our actions without expecting any results. Also, it does not lead to frustration either. Work becomes a labour of love. We don't just do business with our family members.

In line with this thinking, our focus shifts to YOU on Guru Poornima 2010, when the disciples become Gurus. It is my fond hope that 1000 of you learn to be teachers of Chandi Path. It is my fond hope that you become Devipuram, each one of you, where Devi lives in your life to heal this ailing world.

GURU POURNAMI 2010: YOU WILL DO SAHASRA CHANDI YAJNA AT DAKSHAVATI IN DEVIPURAM WHEN GURU PAYS HIS RESPECTS TO YOU, HUGS EACH OF YOU WITH AFFECTION AND A DEEP LOVE.

Let us all join in this 1000 masters program!

You will perform a Sahasra Chandi on Guru Pournami at Devipuram at Dakshavati. Each of you will bring 1 kilogram of

Guruji and Ammah sipping tea under the tin roof in Devipuram.

ghee in packets, and a packet of havan powder for the yajna. We will supply 250 havan kundas, and wood fuel.

We would prefer if you learn Chandi, and then participate in the yajna. Our intent is to train 1000 of you to learn and recite Chandi Saptashati before the event. On Guru Pournami, 1000 people will recite Chandi path in the morning together. In the evening, they will all do Chandi havan in 250 homa kundas with 4 persons per homa kunda. Everyone will offer ghee and homa podi.

Each person will pay Rs. 1000 (approximately $25 USD) for participating in the Sahasra Chandi Yajna, just to cover the costs of organising and food. If you can't participate physically, you may like to sponsor the event.

If you commit to learn Chandi before Guru Pournami, we will give away a learning CD free. We are prepared to give 1000 such CDs. You can make copies and give free copies to your friends. The CDs will help you learn to recite Chandi in one month, if you commit two hours per day. The learning takes place in the following steps:

Step 1. Open the folder Lrn Chandi1. Each half of a sloka is recited twice. First, listen carefully to the slow Guruji's voice, spelling out each word. When it is repeated, say it aloud. Like that, do all the 13 chapters.

Step 2. Open Lrn Chandi2. Each half of a sloka is recited twice musically. First, listen carefully to the voice, rendering each line with Vedic intonation. When it is repeated, say it aloud, synchronise your voice, and recite it exactly the same way as you are hearing it.

Step 3. Do steps one and 2 repeatedly 3 or 4 times.

Step 4. Open Lrn Chandi3. Entire Chandi path is recited non-stop. Sing along with the voice. Do this 3 or 4 times. You are ready to do the yajna!

Within one month, you will be able to recite all 13 chapters of Chandi. When the Chandi is played on the public address system, you will easily follow it in your voice and offer the ghee and havan powder with the "svahas."

All these learning modules are going to be made available on devipuram.com for free download. If you can learn Chandi, you can surely learn Sahasranamam, Trishati, Ashtottaram, Soundarya Lahari, and the Pancha suktams. If you can learn, you can teach too. You will become teachers. We can organize events like that everywhere in the world by you!

We will all join in this 1000 masters program to make the Sahasra Chandi by 1000 people in one day a thumping success! Later on, we may start dreaming about 100,000 Chandis in one day in a stadium.

Guruji, Devipuram, Shivaratri 2010

Sri Gurubhyo Namaha