



Sri Chakra

The Source of the Cosmos

The Journal of the Sri Rajarajeswari Peetam, Rush, NY



*Sri Raja Rajeswari &
Sri Chaitanyananda Natha Sarasvati*

*Abhishekam during
Navaratri Brahmotsavam 2020*

Blossom 25 Petal 4

December 2020



IN THIS ISSUE

Temple Bulletin	3
COVID-19 Update from SVTS	4
Past Events	5
Upcoming Temple Events	8
NEW! 2021 Pocket Calendar	9
Steps Towards Our Granite Temple	10
Aiya's Vision	12
Lalita's Sahasra Namas	15
A Journey into the Navākṣarī Ratneśvarī Mantrās	21
Gānāmruatham	23
Gurus, Saints and Sages	28
Naivēdyam Nivēdayāmi	31
Kids Korner!	34



TEMPLE BULLETIN

Rajagopuram Project

As many of you know, Aiya has been speaking about the need for a more permanent sacred home for Devi for a number of years. Over the past 40 years, the Temple has evolved into an important center for the worship of the Divine Mother Rajarajeswari, attracting thousands of visitors each year from around the world.

It is now time to take the next step in fulfilling Aiya's vision of constructing an Agamic temple in granite complete with a traditional Rajagopuram. With the grace of the Guru lineage and the loving blessings of our Divine Mother, now is the right time to actively participate and contribute to make this vision a reality.

The new Temple will be larger and will be built according to the Kashyapa Shilpa Shastra. By following the holy Agamas, more divine energy than ever will be attracted into the Temple, and the granite will hold that energy for 10,000 years, bringing powerful blessings to countless generations into the future.

As Maha Periyava has beautifully explained: "Temple Renovation, Reconstruction, Kumbabhishekam, etc. are all considered extremely noble deeds. We all should do whatever we can towards these and earn Punya Karma. Whatever we offer, it may be a brick, but as long as that brick is there in that temple, we will spend that much time (thousands of years) in Kailash or Vaikuntham."

To learn more, please visit srividya.org/rajagopuram. To contribute or set up monthly donations, please visit srividya.org/donate and select "Rajagopuram Building Fund" from the menu. If you would like to offer your time or expertise towards this noble endeavour, please contact Natarajan Mama at (585) 533 - 1970.

Temple Links

Private Homa/Puja Booking:
srividya.org/puja

Rajagopuram Project (Granite Temple):
srividya.org/rajagopuram

Email Subscriptions:
srividya.org/email

Temple Timings:
srividya.org/calendar

Event Livestream:
srividya.org/live

Summer Youth Camp (VSI):
srividya.org/camp

Online Donation:
srividya.org/donate

Learning at SVTS:
srividya.org/learn

Alaya Nirmana Ganapathi Puja

Sri Amma had advised the Temple to organize a daily puja for Sri Maha Ganapati to take place on the location where He will be installed in the new Granite Temple. This daily puja commenced on the auspicious full moon day on May 28 and has been continuing since.

The Temple Board & Administration would like to invite all disciples to offer their love and devotion towards the Rajagopuram Project by taking part in performing this daily Ganapati Puja. All who have received mantra diksha from Aiya, Guruji or Gurugaru are welcome and encouraged to sign up to do the puja on the day(s) of their choice. Please contact the Temple Administration for details.

Connect
With
SVTS

📍 6980 East River Road,
Rush, NY
14543
USA

@ info@srividya.org

📱 [Sri Vidya Temple](#)

☎️ (585) 533 - 1970
(416) 628 - 3786

f [Sri Vidya Temple](#)

🌐 www.srividya.org

📺 [Sri Vidya Temple](#)



Sri Chakra • srichakra@srividya.org



Thank You Everyone!

from the SVT's Temple

Dear Devotees,

With Devi's grace and blessings, we hope all of you are adjusting to the new normal and staying safe. Throughout the world, this has been one of the most challenging years, due in great part to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. With Devi's abundant grace, the temple has gradually opened its doors to all devotees and volunteers. This was achieved by following NY state guidelines of maintaining reduced occupancy and health professionals' advice on enhanced safety and cleaning protocols. With everyone working together, we were able to ensure that devotees can have darshan and receive divine blessings in a safe and socially distanced manner.

During such troubling and uncertain times, we have been humbled and encouraged by the support, dedication, and generosity of the entire temple community. It is only because of YOUR unrelenting support that we have been able to continue serving the community. We are very thankful to all of our generous donors and sponsors who have supported the temple and helped us meet the challenges posed by the pandemic so that we can carry out the worship of the Mother, bringing untold blessings to all of humanity.

We are incredibly grateful to all our dedicated volunteers who have supported all temple activities and worked tirelessly despite the pandemic. They have been instrumental in continuing the daily and weekly pujas as well as temple festivals and VSI camp, which were conducted seamlessly.

We pray that Sri Rajarajeswari will bestow Her most loving blessings on the entire community and, indeed, the whole world so that all can enjoy good health and prosperity. We look forward to continuing to join with all of you in serving the Mother and our entire community.

In Sri Rajarajeswari's Seva,
Temple Administration

***Darshan is Now Available
Upon Registration!***

*Click below for details on safety
measures and how to register*

<https://srividya.org/darshan/>



navaratri brahmotsavam 2020





COVID-19

Global Pandemic

Around the second week of March, 2020, the world witnessed a pandemic due to the global health crisis owing to the spread of a coronavirus. COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) of the SARS-CoV2 family of coronaviruses is highly contagious and the state and central governments requested that all public institutions be closed to the public to reduce the spread of COVID-19. For the first time in the history of the temple, the premises was closed to the public. All the nitya pujas, Saturday pujas, Pradosha pujas, festivals and Pournami homams were performed as usual but with a few dedicated local volunteers each time. All pujas and events were livestreamed for devotees to witness and get Her blessings.

PAST EVENTS

... September 2020 to
December 2020



Dwajaroohanam

Dwajaroohanam is the flag hoisting ceremony which is conducted one week before the first day of the Navaratri Brahmotsavam. This year it fell on a Saturday, albeit amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of devotees in the temple was limited to a maximum of 40 at any given time. As is tradition, Aiya made a special mixture using unique and sacred dravyams mixed together to make an aromatic paste. This paste was first used to draw the design on the Dwajam, flag – one that is unique to each year's theme. This year, a beautiful image of the divine mother was drawn along with a yantra and Her ayudhas. The main pujaris proceeded to the sanctum to hoist the flag and decorate the Dwajasthambam with rudrakshas, Darbha grass, garlands, kunjams, multiple silk dhotis and Bhairava's Trishulam. Dwaja puja was performed every afternoon along with Ganapathi Thalam until the end of the festival on Vijayadashami day. In accordance with the current safety guidelines, all other devotees watched the ceremony from the homam area.



Oct

17 - 27

Sharada Navaratri

The theme of the Navaratri Brahmotsavam this year was 'Sahasranamams'. Every day commenced with the typical Navaratri festivities followed by a sahasranamam homam that adorned a specific deity for each day. Aiya performed the rituals on the first day followed by a different senior upasaka on every subsequent day for the entire Brahmotsavam. In the evening, Sri Chakra Navavarna puja was performed in addition to a unique Sri Yantra puja. The 'Sri Jyoti puja' was performed on a beautifully decorated Sri Yantra with a new decoration with flowers, petals, leaves, grains etc and lamps for each day. This year the festival was celebrated over an 8 day period with 2 days dedicated to Goddess Durga, and 3 days each for Goddess Lakshmi and Saraswathi. All 3 deities were taken out in procession on Utsavam days. This year the population in the temple at any given time was scaled down to 40 in accordance with the COVID-19 pandemic safety guidelines. On Vijayadasami day, Chandi homam was performed and the main kalasham was taken in procession around the temple and abhishekam was performed to Devi and the utsava murthis that was subsequently taken in procession on the chariot. On the evening of Dasami day, Vidyarambam was performed for children to are beginning their quest for knowledge. This year the ceremony was performed by each parent with their child instead of the main pujari in accordance with COVID-19 safety guidelines. The following day was Theerthotsavam where all the deities who were taken in procession were cooled down and the flag was brought down. The final day was Kulirthi when all the mula murthis received a grand abhishekam with several sacred items to cool them down marking the conclusion of the festival.



Oct - Nov

25 - 14

Kedara Gauri

Kedara Gauri Vratam is a 21 day festival that begins on Vijayadasami day following the Chariot procession. This festival is performed to Lord Ardhanarishwara to pray for union with Lord Shiva. A kalasham was installed on the first day in front of the main deity with daily pujas being performed to the Kalasham, Rasa Lingam and Lord Ardhanarishwara. On the final day, abhishekam was performed to the deity with a grand alankaram and dhanam to 21 suvasinis who were given 21 items as prasadam including mangala items like Vastram, bangles, comb, mirror, flowers, fruits, cooked prasadam to name a few. The festival is concluded with the sharadu thread being tied around the hand.



Nov

15 - 21

Skanda Shashti

Skanda Sashti vratam is a 6-day festival dedicated to each of the 6 faces of Lord Muruga. This year, a special Subramanya Trishati was offered as part of the archana in lieu of sahasranamam. On the 6th day, the war and victory of Lord Muruga over the Asura Soorapadman was enacted using a banana tree. Following the war, Muruga received an abhishekam as a cooling process along with a garland from Devi as a reward for winning the war. The following day, Muruga's auspicious weddings were performed. This day fell on a Saturday so it was performed in parallel with the weekly Saturday homam and puja. Lord Muruga's wedding was performed to Devasena with all the traditional wedding rituals. Valli's wedding on the other hand was performed in the presence of Dwara Ganapathi who was the divine witness of this auspicious event. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, 40 devotees were permitted to witness the ceremonies with the additional devotees being accommodated in the cabin with live coverage on a large screen.



Thiru Kartikai Deepam

This year this auspicious festival marking the full moon day in the holy Karthika month fell on a Sunday. This festival is dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva and is accompanied with illuminating the entire temple with lamps. As is tradition, a large Shivalingam was decorated with spatika lingams and lamps surrounded by 8 lingams on the 8 directions around representing the directional deities. Volunteers decorated the sanctum with lamps and a beautiful rangoli in front of the Dwajasthambam. The rangoli featuring Lord Ganapathi was drawn and decorated with lamps in addition to flower kolam and floating flowers, floating candles. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and safety restrictions, the festival was attended by 40 devotees at any given time.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December

17 Thiruvempavai - Start

19 to 24 Sri Vidya Satsang

27 Raja Mathangi Homam

28 to 30 Winter Learning Session

30 Thiruvempavai - End

January

14 Thai Pongal

**All events will occur at the Sri Rajarajeswari Peetam, Rush, NY, unless otherwise stated above.*

**Please keep an eye out for Temple emails with updated information on upcoming events due to restrictions that may need to be placed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.*



IN THREE MONTHS ...

Devi willing, the next issue of the *Sri Chakra* will be up on the temple's website at the beginning of March 2021.

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 November 1, 2020. Please e-mail us with your contributions or feedback about this issue at srichakra@srividya.org or talk to Virroshi at the temple.

Sri Gurubhyo Namaha!

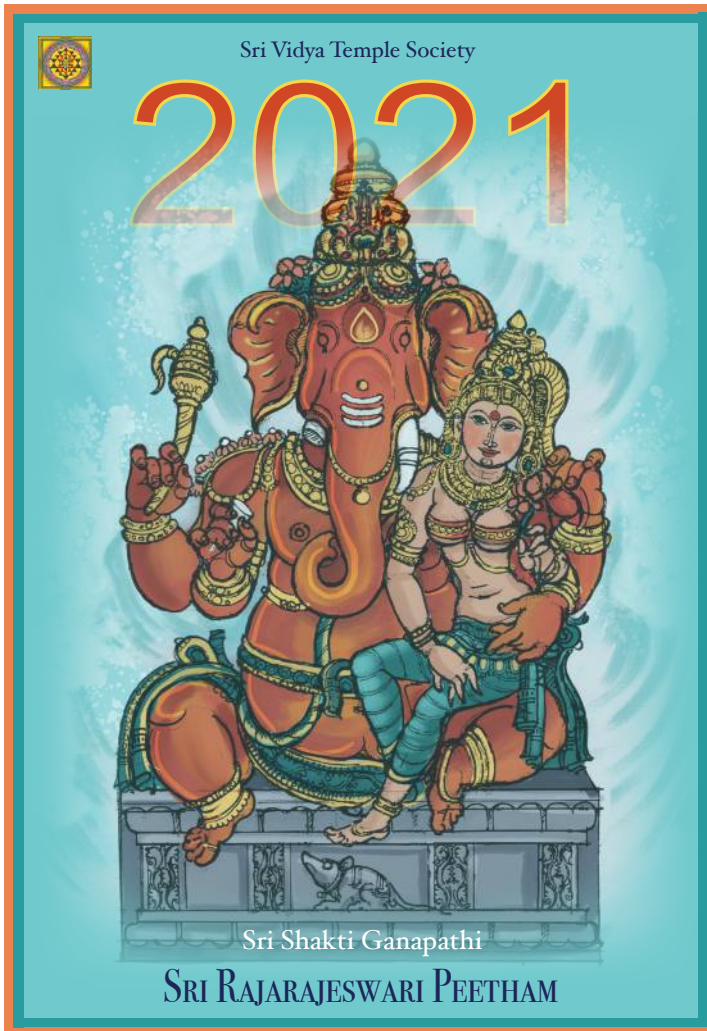
Our special thanks & gratitude to this issue's volunteers:

Aiya, Ametha Anandavimalan, Adheesh Ankolekar, Vilas Ankolekar, Brian Campbell, Veena Ganeshan, Mangala Janahan, Suhina Kanapathipillai, Sriganesh Madhvanath, Kamyam Ramaswamy, Luxan Shanthakumar, Bala Vidya Team, Temple Administration, and the Granite Temple Construction Committee.

The Sri Vidya Temple Society

2021 Pocket Calendar

has been released!



IMPORTANT DATES 2021

☾ Purnima ☽ Pradhosham, Sani Pradhosham*

JANUARY ☾ 28 ☽ 10,25	SEPTEMBER ☾ 20 ☽ 4*,18*
14 Thai Pongal	10 Vinayaka Chaturthi
FEBRUARY ☾ 26 ☽ 8, 24	29 Dwajaroohanam
MARCH ☾ 28 ☽ 10, 26	OCTOBER ☾ 19 ☽ 3,17
11 Maha Sivaratri	6 Navaratri Start
APRIL ☾ 26 ☽ 9, 24*	14 Vijayadasami, Rathotsavam, Kedara Gauri Start
13 Tamil New Year (Pilava)	15 Tirthabhishekam, Dhvajavarohanam
26 Chitra Purnima	16 Kulirtti
MAY ☾ 25 ☽ 8*, 23	NOVEMBER ☾ 18 ☽ 2, 16
JUNE ☾ 24 ☽ 7, 22	3 Diwali
JULY ☾ 23 ☽ 6, 21	4 Kedara Gauri Ends
2 Sri Ganapathi Utsavam	5-9 Skanda Shashti
3 Sri Rajarajeswari Utsavam, Chandi Homa, Chapparam	10 Thirukalyanam
4 Sri Dattatreya Utsavam	19 Thiru Karthikai Vratam (in house on 18th)
5 Bhairavar Madai	DECEMBER ☾ 18 ☽ 1,16,31
23 Guru Purnima	11-20 Thiruvempavai
AUGUST ☾ 21 ☽ 5, 19	20 Ardhradarshanam
7 Adi Amavasya	6980 E River Rd, Rush NY 14543
10 Adi Puram	585.533.1970 416.628.3357
20 Varalakshmi Vratam	www.srividya.org

You can pick them up for free at the temple or refer to this handy-dandy virtual copy above.

Wall calendars will be released in English and Tamil closer to the new year.

Steps Towards Our Granite Temple

- 01 Alaya Nirmana Ganapati Puja
- 02 Ideas & Suggestions
- 03 Design Contract
- 04 Sannidhi & Vighrah Sponsorships
- 05 Phase I
- 06 Pledges for the Main Temple
- 07 Giving Tuesday
- 08 Contract Signed
- 09 Carving is Underway
- 10 Carving & Planning Continues

11 Master Plan Presented to Town

On Oct 20th, 2020, we presented the updated master plan and Phase I plan to the town planning board. We have been asked to provide additional details of the master plan in order to the board to grant approval of the master plan. Once approved, we will be able to break the construction up into phases per our convenience, as opposed to requesting board approval separately for each phase. We are working on updated master plan drawings to present at the town meeting in December.

Aiya's Vision

granite temple & rajagopuram

(part 10)

In this tenth portion of the series, members of the Granite Temple Committee & Temple Administration give an overview of the New Donation Software System and the various options that are available for donations.

New Donation Software System - give.srividya.org

by the Granite Temple Committee & Temple Administration

Our call for pledges in August 2020 has met with a very positive response. Based on feedback from donors, we are now also accepting donations and pledge payments in the form of **stock** as well as **wire transfers** directly to temple bank account.

We have also completely overhauled our donation software system, replacing it with one that is much easier to use. Our new sponsorship and donation site, give.srividya.org, provides our community members and donors with a 'donor portal' where they can update their contact information and look at their donation history.

Please see the following pages to learn more about how to support this noble project:

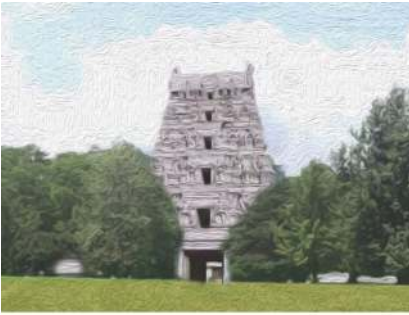




Pledge Your Support

Make a significant impact by pledging your support for temple construction. Click below to learn more.

[Make a Pledge](#)



Set Up a Monthly Donation

Support Granite Temple construction with easy and convenient automatic monthly donations.

[Give Monthly](#)



Make a One-Time Donation

Your support in any amount will bring divine blessings for generations to come. Join us in this historic effort!

[Give Now](#)

Pledge Your Support:

1. You can pledge to sponsor a specific amount towards any of the temple structures mentioned in this form. Detailed descriptions of the temple structures may be found at <https://www.srividya.org/rajagopuram>.
2. You can pledge as an individual or family, or as a group of friends or relatives. However, the pledge will be associated with your name.
3. The pledged amount can be donated in installments over a period of at most 3 years.
4. While making donations at the temple bookstore or website, please indicate that your donation is against your pledge. If others in your group are donating in person or online, please have them indicate that the pledge is in your name.
5. Your contributions are tax-deductible in the USA to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Set Up a Monthly Donation:

Donate to help build a permanent new home for Sri Rajarajeswari.

The options you can choose from are:

- One-Time
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Annually

You can donate any amount as you wish. You can bill to an individual or an organization.

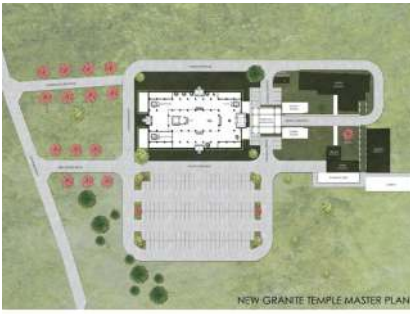
Make a One-Time Donation:

Donate to help build a permanent new home for Sri Rajarajeswari.

Similar to the 'Set Up a Monthly Donation' page, the options you can choose from are:

- One-Time
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Annually

You can donate any amount as you wish. You can bill to an individual or an organization.



Sponsor a Divine Square Foot:

The new granite temple will help to preserve our divine spiritual culture and bring Sri Devi's blessings to countless future generations. Sponsor one or more square feet today!

Sponsor a Square Foot

The new temple will provide ample space for devotees to gather for worship and divine blessings.

Sponsor a Square Foot



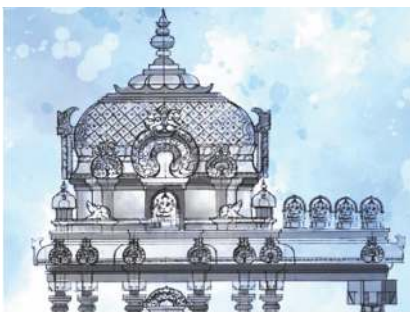
Sponsor a Brick:

Each and every donation brings us closer to the goal of providing a permanent home for Sri Rajarajeswari. Sponsor one or more divine bricks today!

Sponsor a Brick

Every donation brings us one step closer to providing a permanent sacred home for Sri Rajarajeswari.

Sponsor a Brick



Learn More: www.srividya.org/rajagopuram

Here are some Frequently Asked Questions below:

Is my donation or sponsorship tax-deductible?

SVTS is a 501(c)3 organization (Tax ID 16-1489956), and your donation or sponsorship is tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. For more details, please consult with your tax professional.

Can I pay by check?

You can mail a check to the Temple. Please include a note to indicate what you are sponsoring or donating towards.

Who can I contact if I have any questions or concerns?

You can call the Temple at 585-533-1970 or send an email to info@srividya.org or granitetemple@srividya.org. A volunteer will be happy to help you.

Learn More

For more details on floor plans, sannidhi designs, timelines, and current progress, visit our Granite Temple Project page.

Learn More

Lalita's Sahasra Namas

(Part 1)
on the Temple's Social Media Platforms

During the lockdown, the Temple has been posting one nama from the Lalita Sahasranama, along with its meaning, on a daily basis. These posts are made on the temple's social media platforms. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Telegram to get these updates on the daily.

This series will be a continued compilations of these namas for the Sri Chakra community.



#1

śrīmātā

She who is the Mother, showers her children with gifts, including the highest knowledge

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI

SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA
WWW.SRIVIDYA.ORG



#2

śrīmahārājñī

She who is the greatest empress, rules and cares after the entire universe

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI

SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA
WWW.SRIVIDYA.ORG





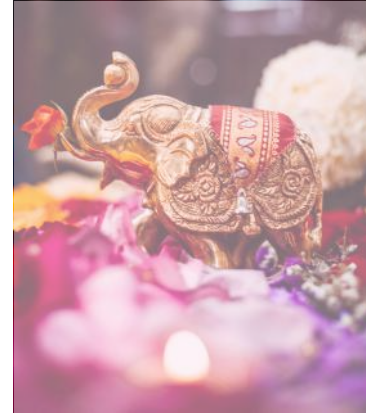
#3

śrīmatsimihāsanēśvarī

She who is the queen seated on a throne mounted upon lions

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI

SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA
WWW.SRIVIDYA.ORG



#4

cidagnikuṇḍasambhūtā

She who is born from the fire of consciousness

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI

SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA
WWW.SRIVIDYA.ORG





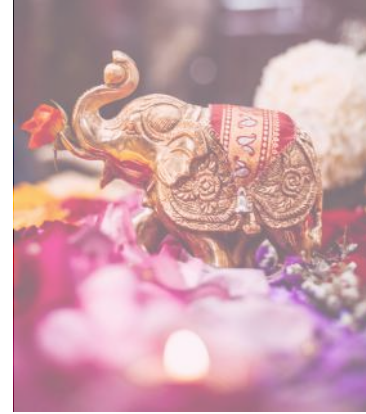
#5

dēvakāryasamudyatā

She who manifested herself to fulfil the objects of the devas

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI

SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA
WWW.SRIVIDYA.ORG



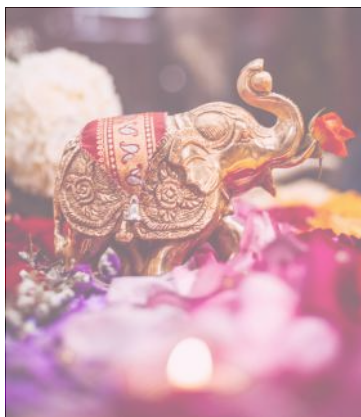
#6

udyadbhānusahasrābhā

She who shines bright red like a thousand rising suns

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI

SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA
WWW.SRIVIDYA.ORG





SRI VIDYA
TEMPLE SOCIETY



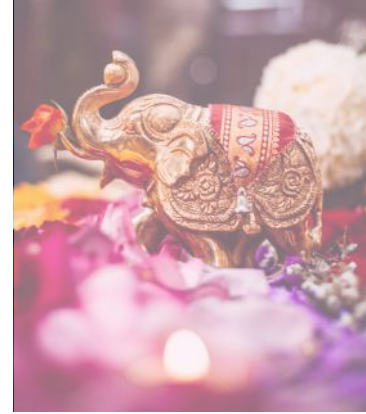
#7

caturbāhusamanvitā

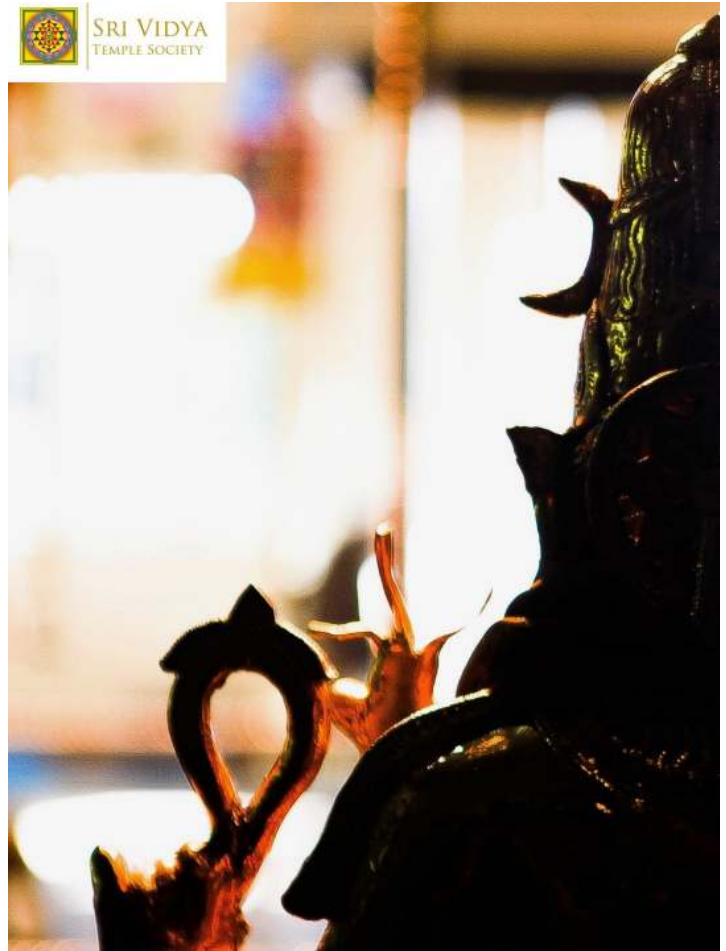
She who is endowed with four splendid arms

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI

SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA
WWW.SRIVIDYA.ORG



SRI VIDYA
TEMPLE SOCIETY



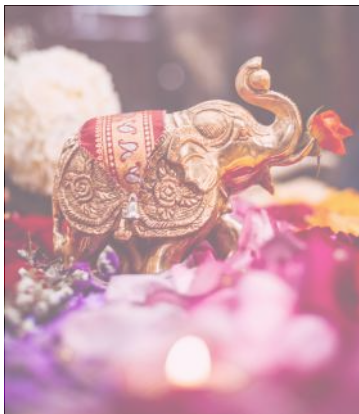
#8

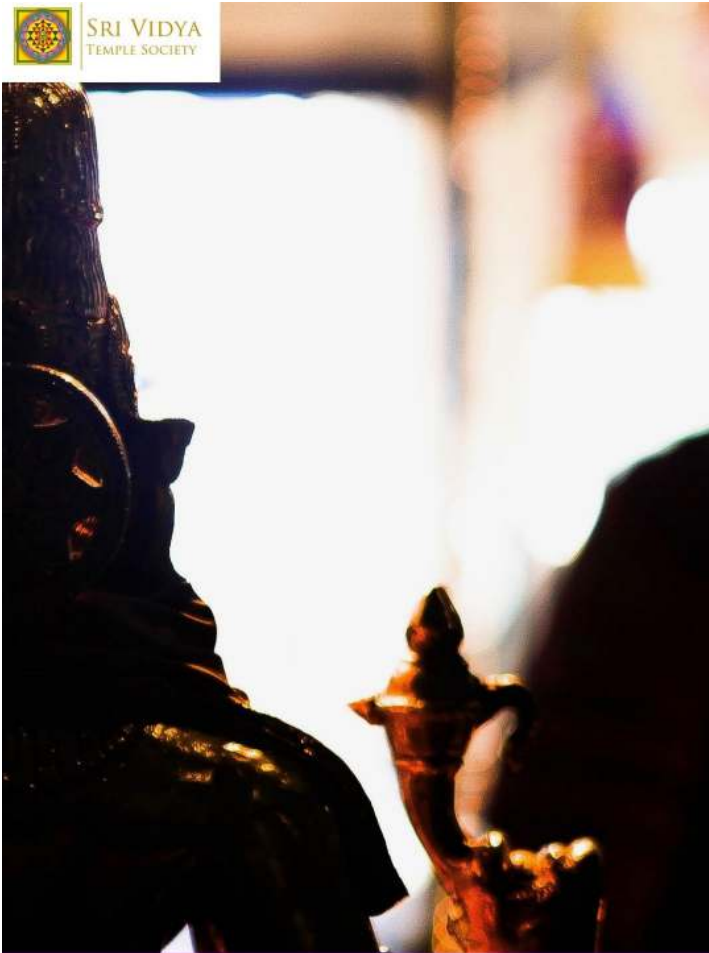
rāgasvarūpapāśādhyā

*She whose upper left hand holds the noose of
Her love*

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI

SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA
WWW.SRIVIDYA.ORG



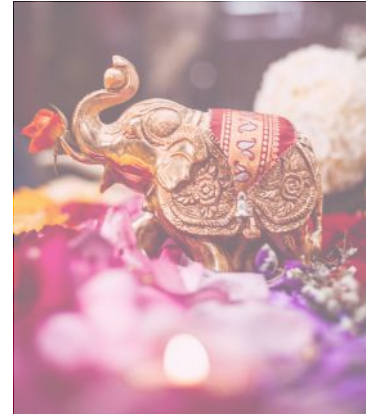


#9

krōdhākārāṅkuśōjvalā

She whose upper right hand holds an elephant goad

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI
SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA

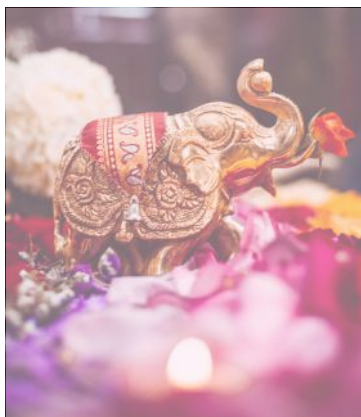


#10

manōrūpēkṣukōdaṇḍā

She whose lower left hand holds the sugar cane bow

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI
SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA
WWW.SRIVIDYA.ORG





SRI VIDYA
TEMPLE SOCIETY



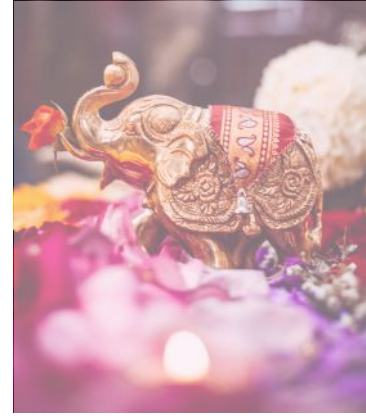
#11

pañcatanmātrasāyakā

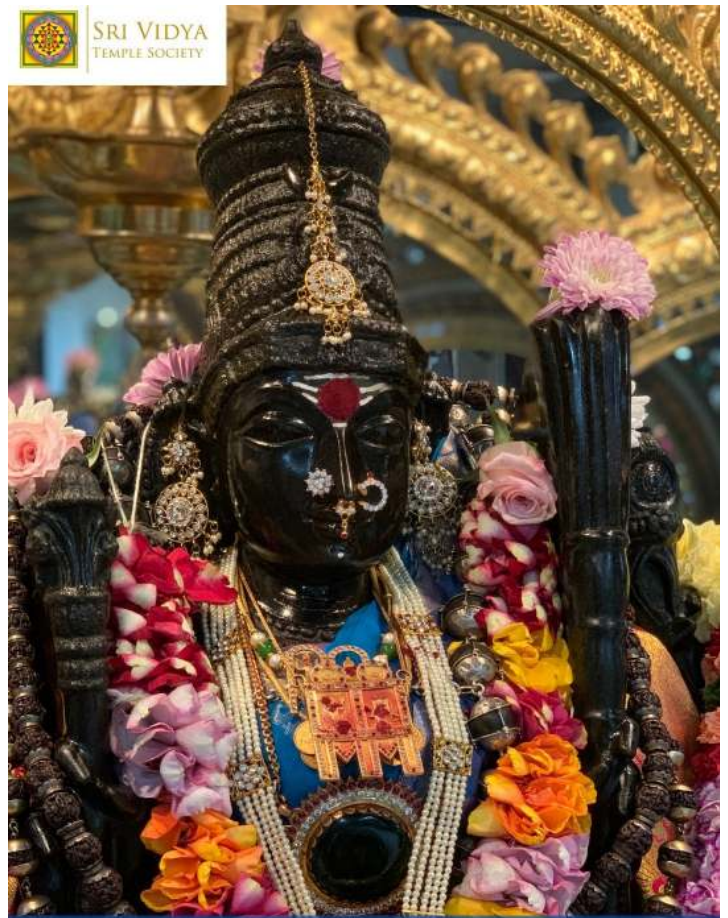
*She whose lower right hand holds the arrows
representing the senses, used to project the universe*

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI

SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA
WWW.SRIVIDYA.ORG



SRI VIDYA
TEMPLE SOCIETY



#12

nijāruṇaprabhāpūramajjadbrahmāṇḍamaṇḍalā

*She whose red brilliance engulfs all the
universes*

BLESSINGS FROM THE DIVINE MOTHER SRI RAJARAJESWARI DEVI

SRI VIDYA TEMPLE, ROCHESTER, NY, USA
WWW.SRIVIDYA.ORG



To be continued...

A Journey into the

Navākṣarī Ratneśvarī Mantrās

(Part 1)

Here is an interesting journey into the Navākṣarī Ratneśvarī Mantrās. Please note that this may be different from our sampradaya.

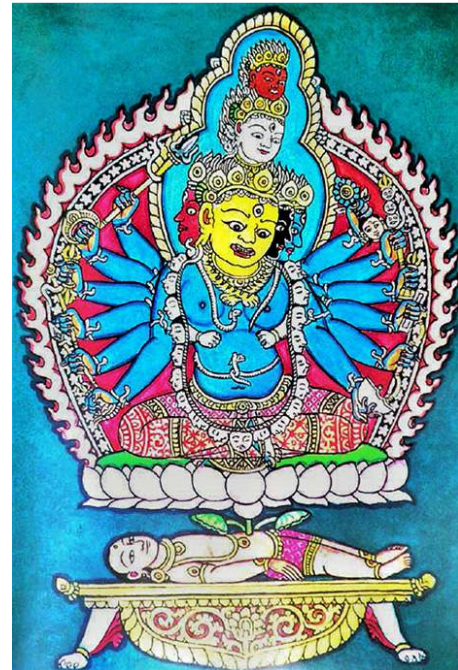
The nine particular bījākṣara mantrās (śrīṃ hrīṃ glūṃ slūṃ plūṃ mlūṃ nlūṃ hrīṃ śrīṃ) and their corresponding mudrās, have fascinated me since I first encountered them a few years ago when I started learning pūjā. I thought to myself, "Where do these mantrās come from?" and "Why can't I find anything about them anywhere?" Over time, I forgot about these questions until recently when an answer appeared quite unexpectedly while looking through some old Sanskrit ritual manuals and secondary scholarly literature on the differences between plūṃ and blūṃ.

It turns out that five (glūṃ slūṃ plūṃ mlūṃ nlūṃ) of the nine bījas are actually spoken about in some depth in the Paścimāmnāya tantric lineage, one of the four principal Śākta tantric āmnāyas (lineages). This has some important historical and doctrinal overlapping with our own Śrī Vidyā traditions which was classically known as coming from the Dakṣināmnāya (now

by Brian Campbell

referred to as the Urdhvāmnāya). This āmnāya classification of revealed tantric lineages is also present (although in an encoded form) in our own 'Āmnāya Samaṣṭi pūjā vidhāna in Aiyā's Śrīcakra pūjā vidhi. In this puja vidhanam, six āmnāyas (here mentioned with their Vedic/Upaniṣadic correlations) are invoked and worshiped.

The Paścimāmnāya is a somewhat unknown kaula lineage centered around the worship of the goddess, Kubjikā (an epithet to kuṇḍalinī) and is mostly practiced in



Kubjikā: painting by Gyankar Bajracharya (1955-2017) of Bhaktapur, Nepal

secret by Newari Brahmins in Nepal. Historically this āmnāya had a following in South India through the tantric-yogic lineages of Matsyendranāth. This was minimally known to both Vidyānanda and his disciple Maheśvarānanda of Cidambaram as evident in their writings and commentaries that cite the Kubjikā tantras in a few instances.

The five bījas are technically known as the ratnapañcaka, or the five jewels, and are representative of the following worlds: gagana, svarga, pātāla, martya, and nāraka/nāga. On the first glance it becomes immediately clear that the first akṣara of each of the 'worlds' is also the first akṣara of each of the 'bījas', adding some additional context to their meaning. The Kubjikāmata tantra lists them as follows: gaganāmṛtaratnaṃ tu svargaratnāmṛtaṃ tathā | pātālamartyaratnaṃ ca nārakaṃ ratnapañcakam (18.63).

The bījas are further described as a grouping of five worlds issuing forth from the union of Śiva



(akula) and (kula) Śakti and include complex and intricate mappings that describe, in detail, how they are to be understood in larger systems as well as used in

ritual worship. Each bīja jewel has a corresponding deva (Brahma, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Īśvara, and Sadāśiva), energy (unmanā, manonmanī, samanā, vyāpinī, and avyaktā), element (earth, water, fire, wind, space), and yoginī



(śrīvidyā, śrīvidyutā, śrīvidyunmālā, śrīvidyutā, and śrīsaṅkhanī), who each number (64, 32, 16, 8, 4) in the millions of billions (lakṣasahasrakoti). The bījas also relate to the specific Paścimāmnāya cakra system (pañcacakra), which consists of five cakras in the body of the upāsaka at the feet, guhya, chest, throat, and forehead regions.

Want to learn more? Keep an eye out for the next issue of the Sri Chakra to dive more into this journey!



Gānāmṛuṭham



ESSENCE OF Shivapuranam (Part 1)

by Aiya

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Aiya has been conducting several weekly sessions explaining the 'Essence of Shivapuranam.' Here is the first installment of a transcription of these sessions.

I am going to start by giving you a brief background on what the Sanatana Dharmam at that time in India was. It is customary in the Dravidian Shiva temples to sing the 12 Thirumurais. A popular rendering of these Thirumurais is confined to 5 Thirumurais. The Thirumurais are poems left behind by various saints who have lived between the first and second centuries up to today. If you look at it overall, Thirumurais have been classified into 12. The first, second and third Thirumurais are escribed to the child saint, Thiru Gnana Sambantha Murthi Nayanar. The fourth, fifth and sixth are attributed to another older saint,



who lived during the time of Thiru Gnana Sambantha, whose name is Appar Swamigal or Thiru Navukkarasar Murthi Nayanar. Thirumurai seven is ascribed to Sundara Murthi Nayanar. Together, the compositions by these three saints – Sambanthar, Appar, and Sundarar – are called *Thevarams* (Deva + Aravaram, which translates to the sound of the divinities).

Thirumurai 8 is Manickavasagar's and is called *Thiruvachakam*. This is the topic for today. We are going to be diving into the first composition of this Saint. Thirumurai 9 is ascribed to a group of saints – to be precise, 9 saints. Thirumurai 10 is ascribed to Thirumoola Nayanar. Thirumurai 11 encompasses the compositions of 11 or 12 saint poets and the 12th Thirumurai is Sekkizhar's Periya Puranam.

These days, due to misuse, most of these extra thirumurais that were mentioned are not chanted in temples unless there is a very special occasion. The people who traditionally chant these Thirumurais are called Odhuvaar Murthis. They are professional singers and know exactly what composition to sing at any given time in a temple during festivals.



It is essential to know a brief life history of the one who wrote Shivapuranam. Manickavasagar was born 30 km away from the great temple town of Madurai. This temple town has been the center, or headquarters, of the Pandiya Kings. He was named 'Manickavasagar' and known as such until the present but his initial name was 'Vaadhavoorar.' He belonged to a family that had studied the vedas, the Upanishads, etc., and they knew Mimamsam, Targam, etc. By the time Vaadhavoorar reached the age of 16, he was well-versed and well-educated in all that needed to be learned in Saiva Siddhantam. It was not only the traditional 'book learning' he was knowledgeable in. He had also acquired, through the grace of Shiva, the unique knowledge of how to apply the Thirumurais.

Arimardhana Pandiya, the Pandiya King that was ruling Madurai at that time, was quite popular with these subjects because he was a moral and ethical ruler. He would frequently enquire about politics, accounts, taxation, etc. of various places, including the tiny villages from people that he sent forth to study the current situations. In this quest, he came to know that there was a gifted 16 year old boy in Vaadhavoor who was positively brilliant. He sent for him immediately and with the permission of his parents, had him brought to his court and made him a Junior Minister. Pretty soon after, the new Junior Minister, not only excelled in the art of governance, but was also able to interpret the laws laid

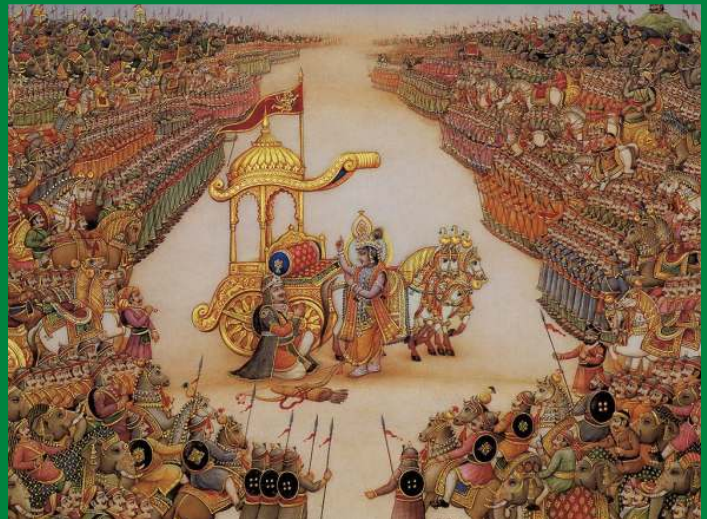




down in the vedas and scriptures. He applied them to every incident and occurrence that was brought before the King's court without any bias. He was then appointed as the 'Chief Minister' shortly thereafter.

Although Vaadhavoorar was in a palace with servants who would take care of every one of his needs and had access to unlimited resources of the palace, the young man was completely detached from the material aspects of life. He was firmly devoted to the Lord of the Meenakshi Sundareshwara Temple, contemplating on Kalyana Sundarar, the glorious form that Lord Shiva took when he married Meenakshi. His detachment and as a result, the brilliance of his intellect shining through impressed Arimardhana Pandiyan to no end.

Back in the old days, a king's armed forces had 4 divisions – *rata gaja turaka padhati*. *Rata* means chariot, implying the chariot force. *Gaja* means elephant, implying the elephant force. *Turaka* means horses, implying the mounted force. *Padhati* implying foot soldiers. At one point in time, it became necessary for the king to replace the horses in his army. The king came to know of the import of horses happening nearby. The king invited Vadhavoorar to the kingdom, asked him to take as much gold from the treasury as needed, and requested him to travel to the coastal city to purchase the best horses needed for his army. Vadhavoorar first went to the Meenakshi temple and took a dip in the temple tank, called the Pot Thamarai Vaavi. He then offered his prayers to Lord Siddhi Vinayaka who resides in the temple to pray that his mission does not encounter any obstacles. Then, he proceeded to pray to Meenakshi Sundareshwarar and worshipped the Lord for His permission to leave. At this point, the priest walked from inside the sanctum and gave him Vibhuti prasadam. He took this as a great omen, and did sashtanga Namaskaram to Shiva. He then made his way out of the city with an entourage, sacks of gold mounted onto horses. He travelled in a palanquin, which was carried by 8 individuals.



A little background of the immediate occurrence that happened after he left the city is

relevant for you to understand. Recall, among the Thirumurais, Thiruvachakam (written by Manickavasagar) was the 8th. In Saiva Siddhantam and in the practice of mantra sashtra, when you perform japam – chanting of the mantras – or smaranam – listening to the mantra being chanted within the chambers of your mind – it is essential to perform a ritual called 'Nyasam'. Nyasam is the act of placing of 'seed syllables' in various parts of the body by touch so that the corresponding areas of the brain become activated. One such example is the 'Shadanga Nyasam' for Shiva or for any mantra:

aiṁ aṅguṣṭhābhyāṁ namaḥ |
klīṁ tarjanībhyāṁ namaḥ |
sauḥ madhyamābhyāṁ namaḥ |
aiṁ anāmikābhyāṁ namaḥ |
klīṁ kaniṣṭhikābhyāṁ namaḥ |
sauḥ karatala karapṛṣṭhābhyāṁ namaḥ ||

aiṁ hṛdayāya namaḥ |
klīṁ śirasē svāhā |
sauḥ śikhāyai vaṣaṭ |
aiṁ kavacāya hum |
klīṁ nētratrāyāya vauṣaṭ |
sauḥ astrāya phaṭ |
bhūḥ bhuvāḥ suvāḥ ṓm iti digbandhaḥ ||

If you take a closer look at the above, *śikhai* (which means hair) ends up being the 8th location. This symbolizes that in the body, there is nothing above the hair. This is one way of telling you that there is nothing greater than the Thiruvachakam.



Interested in reading more about this? Stay tuned for the next issue of the Sri Chakra for a continuation of this explanation by Aiya.

GURUS, SAINTS, *and* SAGES



श्री रामकृष्ण परमहंस

(Part 1)



One of the most prominent religious figures of India during the 19th century was Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He was a master of the mystic arts whose unbearable longing for the Diving Mother propelled him to heights that many could only dream of.

Here is the first installment of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life history.

by Luxan Shanthakkumar

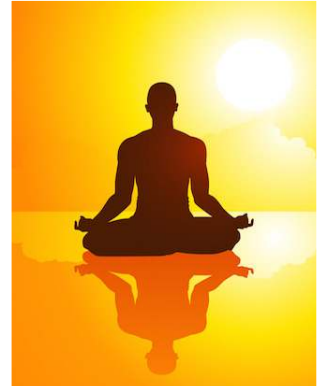
Ramakrishna, initially named Gadadhar, was born to a simple Bengali rural family on February 18th, 1835 to Khudiram Chattopadhyay and Chandramani Devi. Khudiram was an ardent bhakta of Vishnu, specifically a form of Vishnu called Gadadhar who actually appeared to Khudiram in his dream and promised to be born as his son - hence his name. Like any child Gadadhar was quite restless, full of fun and sweet mischief, intelligent, precocious and endowed with a prodigious memory.

At the age of seven, Gadadhar had his first experience of spiritual ecstasy. One day in July, when he was walking along a very narrow path between paddy fields and eating delicious puffed rice that his amma, mother, had prepared in a small wooden basket, he looked up at the sky and saw an expansion mass of pitch-black thunder clouds. As it rapidly began to envelop the sky above him, a flight of beautiful snow-white cranes passed in front of it. The contrast between the dark clouds and the white birds overwhelmed the young Gadadhar and he fell to the ground where villagers found him unconscious. Later when he woke up, he described the experience as an indescribable bliss. A key point in young Gadadhar's life was the loss of his father. For the first time, the young boy realized the impermanence of life and slowly his drift into spirituality had begun. Gadadhar would find various ways to pick the brains of the holy men that passed through his



village, and in return, they would entertain the young one with Hindu epics, stories of saints, and their own adventures.

At the age of nine, Gadadhar was invested with the sacred thread (Yajñopavitam) which brought upon him the many strict disciplines of a Brahmin life along with the worship of their family deity Raghuvira (Sri Rama). However, Gadadhar was more keen on leading life on the rule of compassion rather than the rules imposed on him.



When the upanayana ceremony was being completed, Gadadhar began his first training into meditation. It is said that 'that boy' very quickly became lost in contemplation and behind his boyish light heartedness loomed a great deep spiritual essence.



On the night of Shivaratri, many of the local villagers had put together a dramatic production in which Gadadhar played the part of Lord Shiva. While his friends were dressing him for the role – smearing his body with Vibhuti, placing rudrakshas around his neck, arming him with a large trident – Gadadhar had become absent minded and was consumed by various thoughts. When it was time to perform, he approached the stage with measured steps, the audience loudly applauded and was in awe at how beautiful Gadadhar looked. As streams of tears filled the young boy's eyes, he was lost to the outer

world and the bliss that had enraptured him before in the patty fields returned once again, except this time he was conscious; the effect of this scene on the audience made them feel as though they were graced with a vision of the Lord Himself. This experience lasted him until the next morning as neither Gadadhar nor anyone else could shake him out of his trance. He quickly became the talk of the village, the women loved to hear him sing and recite from the ancient scriptures, the elderly women looked at him as their own baby Krishna. However, as Gadadhars fate would have it, he could no longer stay at his little village as his Divine Mother called to him from Calcutta.

Why was he called from Calcutta? What did he do in Calcutta?

Curious to know the answers to these? Watch for the next issue of the Sri Chakra to learn more.



hālvēdyam

hīvēdayamī



Peanut Sundal (Verkadalai Sundal)

by Ametha Anandavimalan

What is Verkadalai Sundal?

Sundal is a traditional South Indian naivedyam which is mostly made of legumes or nuts.

For which deities is Kesari usually offered to?

Dattatreya, Guru, Devi

When can you offer Kesari?

Puja

What are some festivals you can offer Kesari for?

Dattatreya Utsavam, Guru Poornima, Navaratri

Always remember not to smell or taste food when it is being made as Naivedyam. In addition, always think pure thoughts and make the Naivedyam whole-heartedly. A good way to do this is to chant mantras or shlokas that you may know or the nama of your ishta devata.

We thank Ametha Anandavimalan and the Thulasi Kitchen Coordinators for providing this recipe to the Sri Chakra.

Soak Time	Prep Time	Cook Time	Serves
2 hours	5 minutes	10-15 minutes	4 people

Ingredients:

2 cups Peanuts
1 tsp Mustard Seeds
2 tsp Urad Dhal
2 Red Chilies
2 Green Chilies (finely chopped)
¼ cup Grated Coconut
1/4 cup Grated Green Mango
2 sprigs Curry Leaves
1 sprig Coriander Leaves
4 tsp Sesame Oil
3 pinches of Asafetida
1 inch Ginger (finely chopped)
Salt per taste



When Sri Amma was here during July Festival in 2014, she had specifically requested for Verkadalai Sundal to be made and offered as the main Naivedyam for Dattatreya during the evening parikrama puja. Since this day, it has become tradition to offer Verkadalai Sundal for Dattatreya on this day in the evening.

Instructions:

1. Wash and soak the peanuts for roughly 2 hours, drain and pressure cook with 2 cups of water and salt for 5-6 whistles. Then turn the heat to low. Simmer for a few minutes and turn off the heat. Let the pressure release naturally and keep aside.
2. Preheat pan, add sesame oil, mustard seeds, urad dhal and allow the seeds to crackle and the dhal to turn golden brown colour.
3. Then sauté the Asafetida, red chilies, green chilies, ginger, and curry leaves for a few seconds.
4. After that, add the cooked peanuts, grated coconut, and grated mango. Stir fry for about 3 to 5 minutes and add the chopped coriander leaves and mix well. Add salt to taste.
5. Transfer to your Naivedya patra and offer hot.



amṛtam mahā naivēdyam nivēdayāmi!





* KIDS * K O R N E R *

Story Time with Kamya Aunty

by Kamya Ramaswamy

Kalidasa (Part 2)

A Child Searching For His Mother's Divine Love

A Compassionate Mother

There are a couple of versions of this story but they both end the same way. In one version, the young man hid when he saw Mother Kali walking around outside her temple. Many believe that deities come alive at night and patrol the surrounding area—this is why you should never be roaming around temple grounds after 11:30 p.m. or so., especially not alone. Many families hold the same rule for their shrine rooms inside the home. They close the area and do not re-enter until dawn the next morning.

These deities are not interested in hurting anyone, but the shock at seeing an unearthly being is said to be too much for humans. Kalidasa was different, though. His lack of intellect also made him unafraid, like a toddler is unafraid of the things that most adults fear. He saw this as an opportunity. The story goes that he waited until Maa Kali went around the corner, then rushed into the temple and locked the door from the inside.



It gets funny from this point, with the Mother imploring him to unlock the door, and him saying he wouldn't until she made him intelligent. Finally, she gave in and told him to stick his tongue through the keyhole. He did, and she wrote the letter "Om" on his tongue. He opened the door and suddenly began to spout the most vivid poetry in the purest Sanskrit upon seeing her in her full form. She renamed him Kalidasa and he began his new life.

Another version of this story finds the young man entering the temple in the dark and

encountering Maa Kali face to face. He begs her to make him intelligent but she tells him that it is his karmic burden to remain unintelligent for seven lifetimes. The young man is immensely disappointed, but the Mother's compassion knows no limits. She tells him she has an idea, and proceeds to take his life and reinstate it seven times in a row, right there in the temple.

The final time she revived him, he awoke to see her with fresh eyes and uncontrollably spouted a colourful description of her glory in perfect Sanskrit. That description is now recited by devotees and is called the *Shyamala Dandakam*. At the Rajarajeswari Peetam, we typically have seen it chanted as an ode to the goddess Matangi, which is not incorrect. Let us remember that Matangi also exhibits the fierce love seen in Kali, and Kali exhibits the intellect seen in Matangi.

Kalidasa went on to become one of the nine jewels in the court of King Vikramaditya, and is widely referred to today as the **Shakespeare of India**. Most people remember him for his plays and masterful use of the Sanskrit language to paint entire scenes with just words.

Important to Note when doing your own research on Kalidasa: Most biographies will say that after the princess insulted him, he took up the challenge to educate himself, and will not pass an opinion on his mystical meeting with the Mother. But there is a reason why he was named Kalidasa part way through his life at a pivotal moment, and no historian has ventured a guess as to who, exactly, gave him that name.



Statue of Sanskrit poet Kalidasa on one of the most important streets in Shanghai, China.

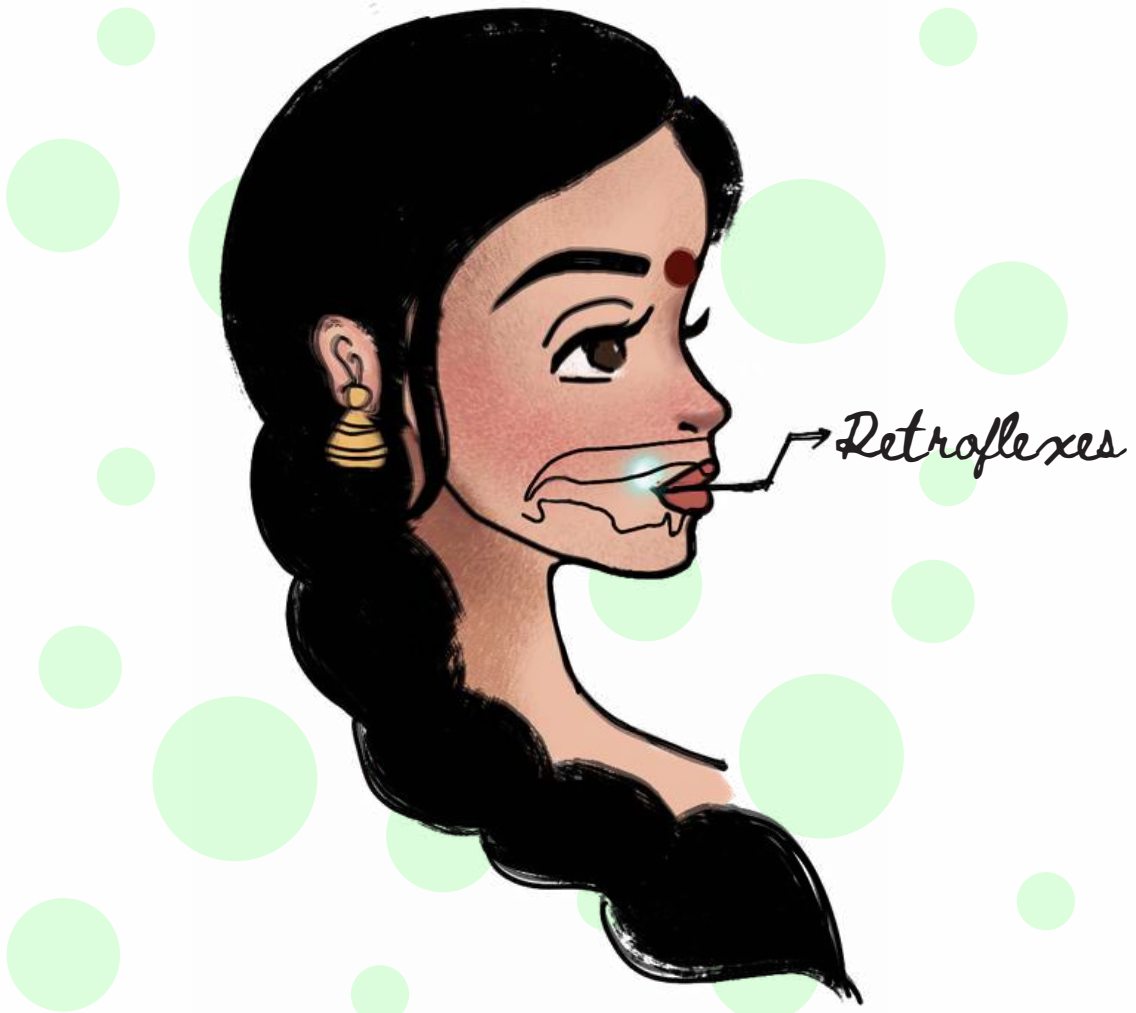
BALA
VIDYA

AKSHARAMALA #4

Retroflexes

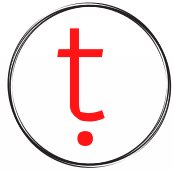
Bala Vidya is now on YouTube!! Here is an infographic summarizing the, "*Sanskrit Aksharamala - Retroflexes*" video. The link to the video is below. Try following along with this infographic while watching the video.

<https://youtu.be/lo6UjNB4iy8>



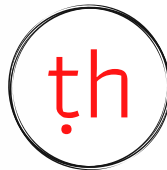
Retroflexes are sounds that are produced when your tongue flicks to the top of your mouth.

Watch video here: <https://youtu.be/lo6UjNB4iy8>



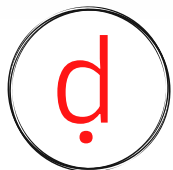
aṣṭa (eight)

sounds like talk



pāṭha (lesson)

sounds like anthill

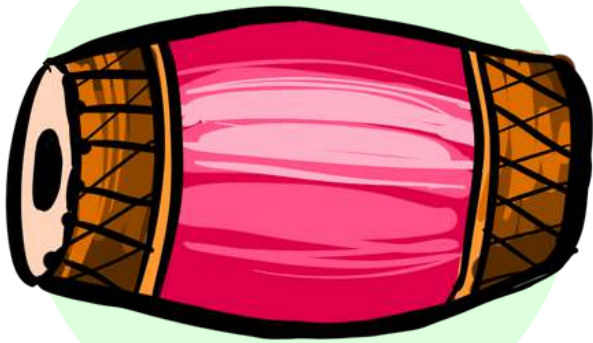


ḍamaru
(drum)

sounds like door

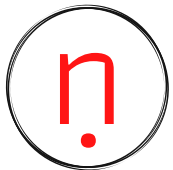


Watch video here: <https://youtu.be/lo6UjNB4iy8>



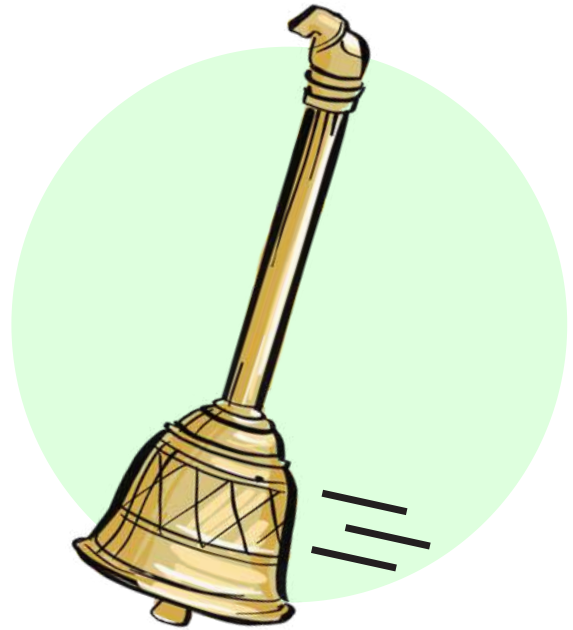
ḍholaha
(large drum)

sounds like hard ḍ hat



ghaṇṭa (bell)

sounds like under



**BALA
VIDYA**



Watch video here: <https://youtu.be/lo6UjNB4iy8>

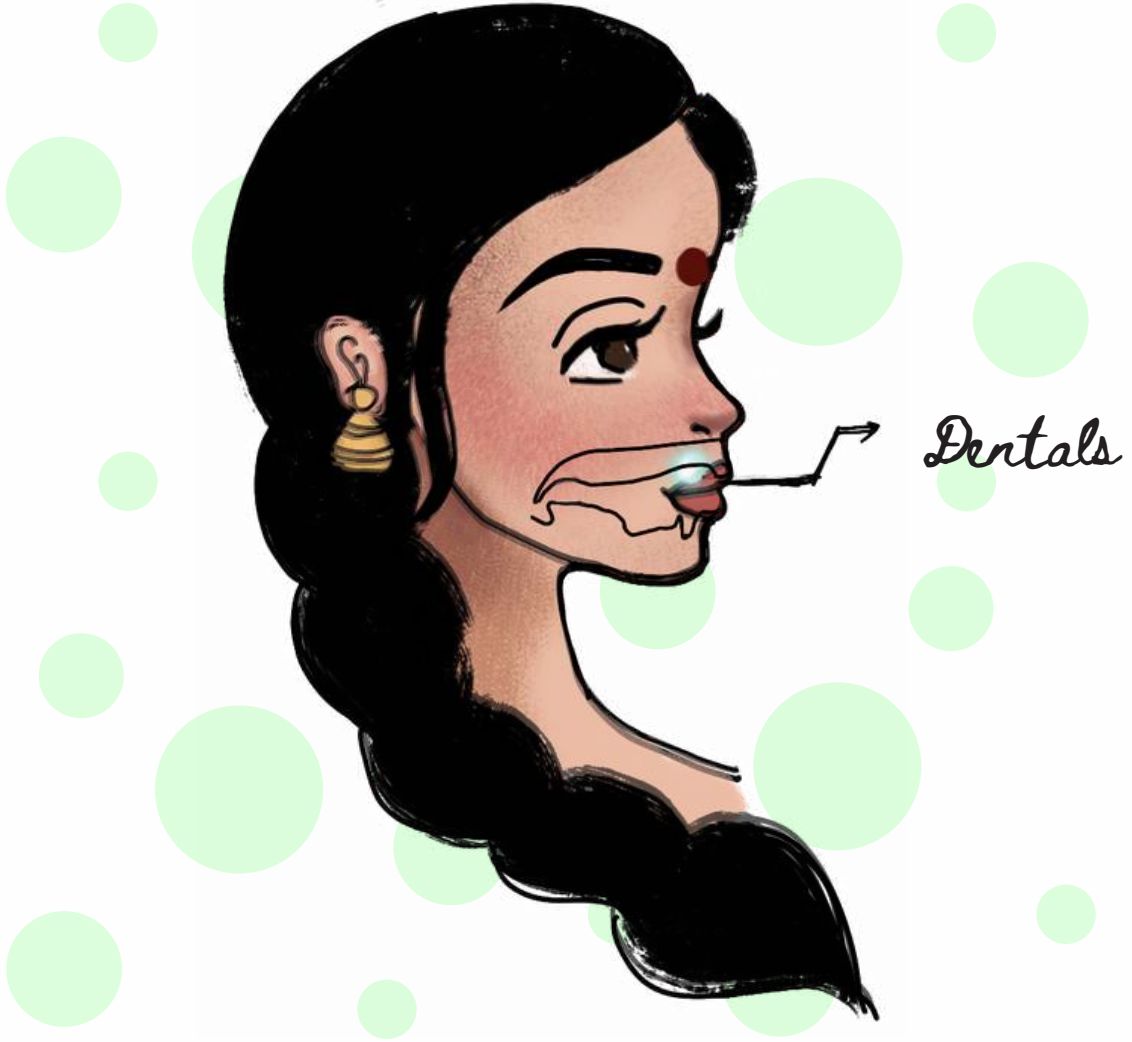
BALA
VIDYA

AKSHARAMALA #5

Dentals

Bala Vidya is now on YouTube!! Here is an infographic summarizing the, "*Sanskrit Aksharamala - Dentals*" video. The link to the video is below. Try following along with this infographic while watching the video.

<https://youtu.be/r4DA9MN2ubo>

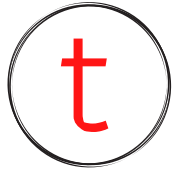


Dentals are sounds that are produced when your tongue touches the back of your teeth.

Watch video here: <https://youtu.be/r4DA9MN2ubo>

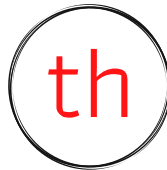
Sri Chakra • srichakra@srividya.org





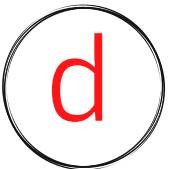
trīṇi (three)

sounds like thin



patha (path)

sounds like with her

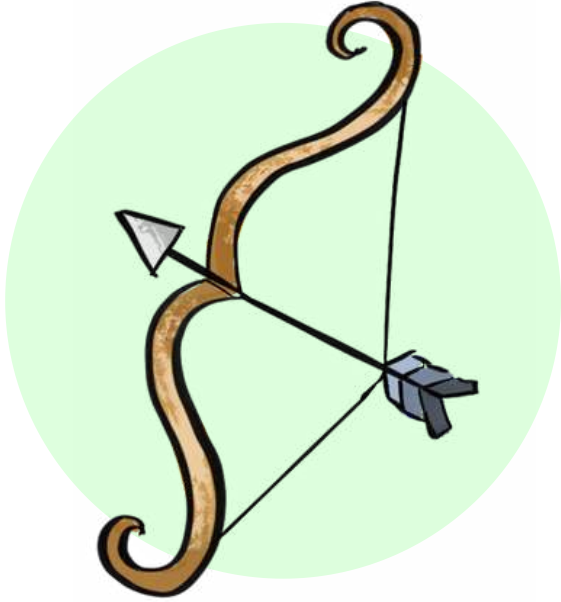


devi
(divine mother
of the universe)

sounds like there



Watch video here: <https://youtu.be/r4DA9MN2ubo>



dh

dhānu (bow)

sounds like breathe

n

nadī (river)

sounds like nice



BALA
VIDYA



Watch video here: <https://youtu.be/r4DA9MN2ubo>

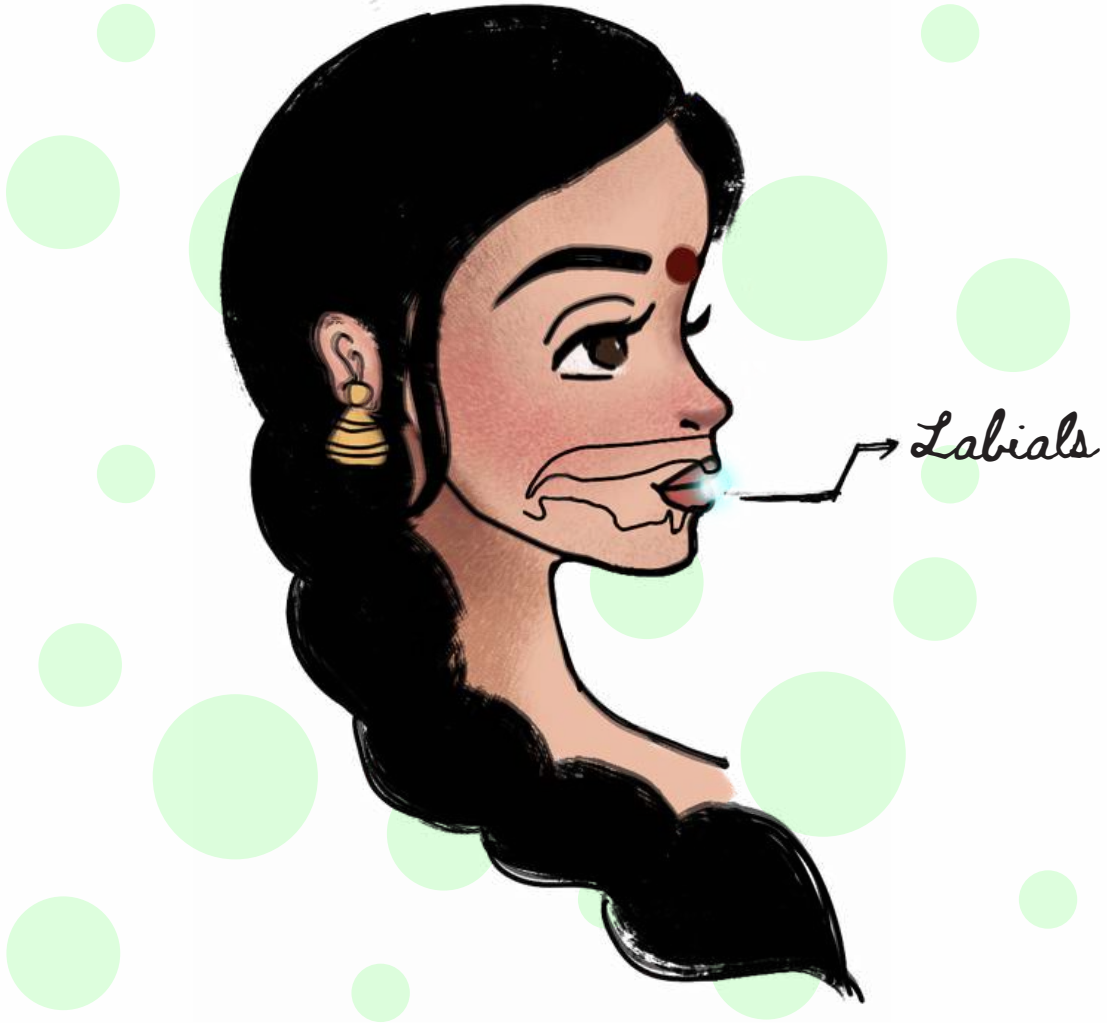
BALA
VIDYA

AKSHARAMALA #6

Labials

Bala Vidya is now on YouTube!! Here is an infographic summarizing the, "*Sanskrit Aksharamala - Labials*" video. The link to the video is below. Try following along with this infographic while watching the video.

<https://youtu.be/MDAjmUXBBil>



Labials are sounds that are produced at the front of your mouth using your lips.

Watch video here: <https://youtu.be/MDAjmUXBBil>

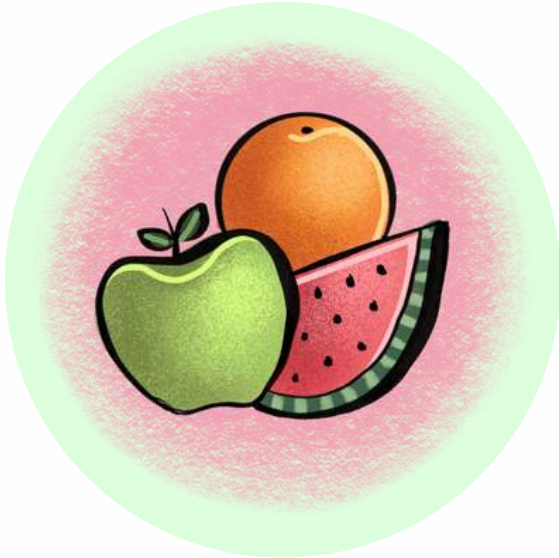
Sri Chakra • srichakra@srividya.org



p

pūjā
(a way of worshipping
a deity)

sounds like paint



ph

phala (fruit)

sounds like uphill

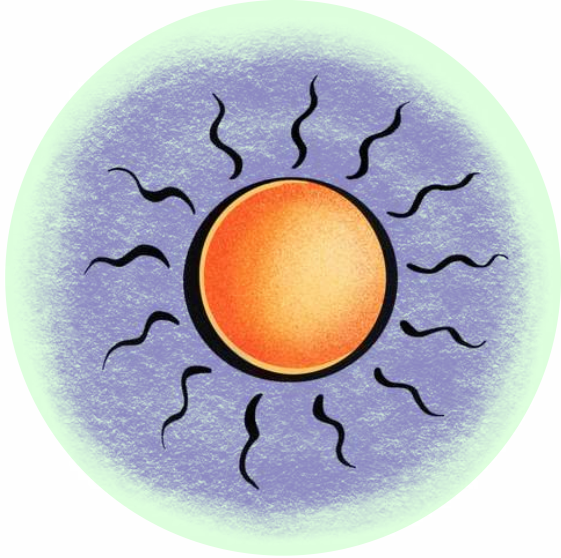
b

bālā
(little girl)

sounds like baby



Watch video here: <https://youtu.be/MDAjmUXBBil>



bh

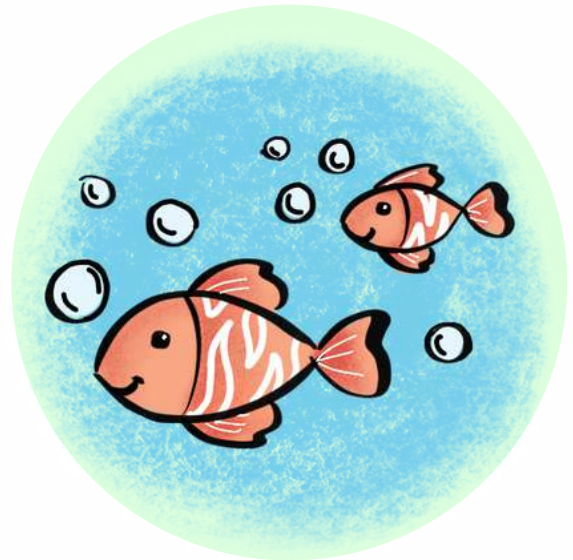
bhānu (sun)

sounds like a**h**or

m

matsya (fish)

sounds like **m**an



BALA
VIDYA



Watch video here: <https://youtu.be/MDAjmUXBBil>



PŪJĀ Class #2

intro to pūjā tray

Bala Vidya is now on YouTube!! Here is an infographic summarizing the, "Introduction to the Puja Tray" video. The link to the video is below. Try following along with this infographic while watching the video.

https://youtu.be/ZG_PCFUvq3Q

WHAT IS A PŪJĀ TRAY?



- a pūjā tray is like a tool box
 - A tool box has all the tools you need to complete a project. Some of these tools include the hammer, saw, and screwdriver.
- Similarly a puja tray contains all the items needed to successfully finish a puja from start to finish.



WHAT ARE AKṢATĀS?



- The yellow rice that is on the pūjā tray.
- It can be used as a substitute for solid offerings that may be unavailable, such as jewelry, flowers, or clothing.
- We can use akṣatās as a substitute because rice represents wealth, and applying turmeric to anything makes it auspicious, or sacred. Therefore, it is ok to offer akṣatās for an item that we do not have.
- Remember, it is always better to offer the actual item to the deity if it is available.

Watch video here: https://youtu.be/ZG_PCFUvq3Q

Sri Chakra • srichakra@srividya.org

WHAT IS A PAÑCAPĀTRAM?



- A pañcapātram contains water and is used for any upacārams in the puja that include water
- upacārams :
 - snānam = bath
 - ācamaniyam = drink of water
- The pañcapātram is normally made out of silver or brass.
- Before we start any puja, we purify the water in the pañcapātra as part of the pūrvānga puja.
 - We energize the water by chanting mantrās while holding the pañcapātram in our hands.
 - We invoke all the holy rivers such as Ganga and Yamuna into the water.
 - In this process we turn the water into amṛtam.
 - amṛtam = divine nectar



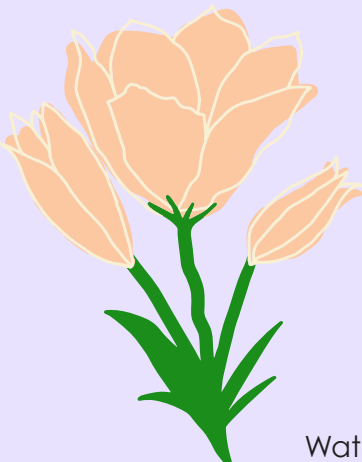
the ācamaniyam

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ĀCAMANIYAM AND THE PAÑCAPĀTRAM IS:

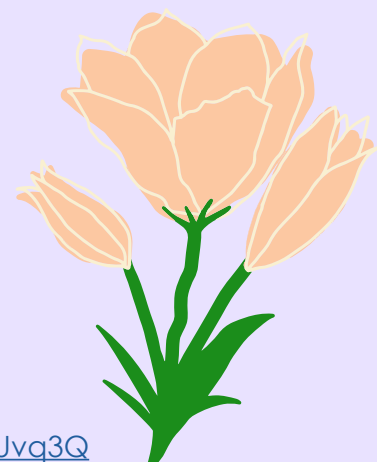
The pañcapātram is used only for the deity, where as the ācamaniyam is used by the person performing the puja and others witnessing the puja.



the pañcapātram



**BALA
VIDYA**



Watch video here: https://youtu.be/ZG_PCFUvq3Q



Sri Gurubhyo Namaha