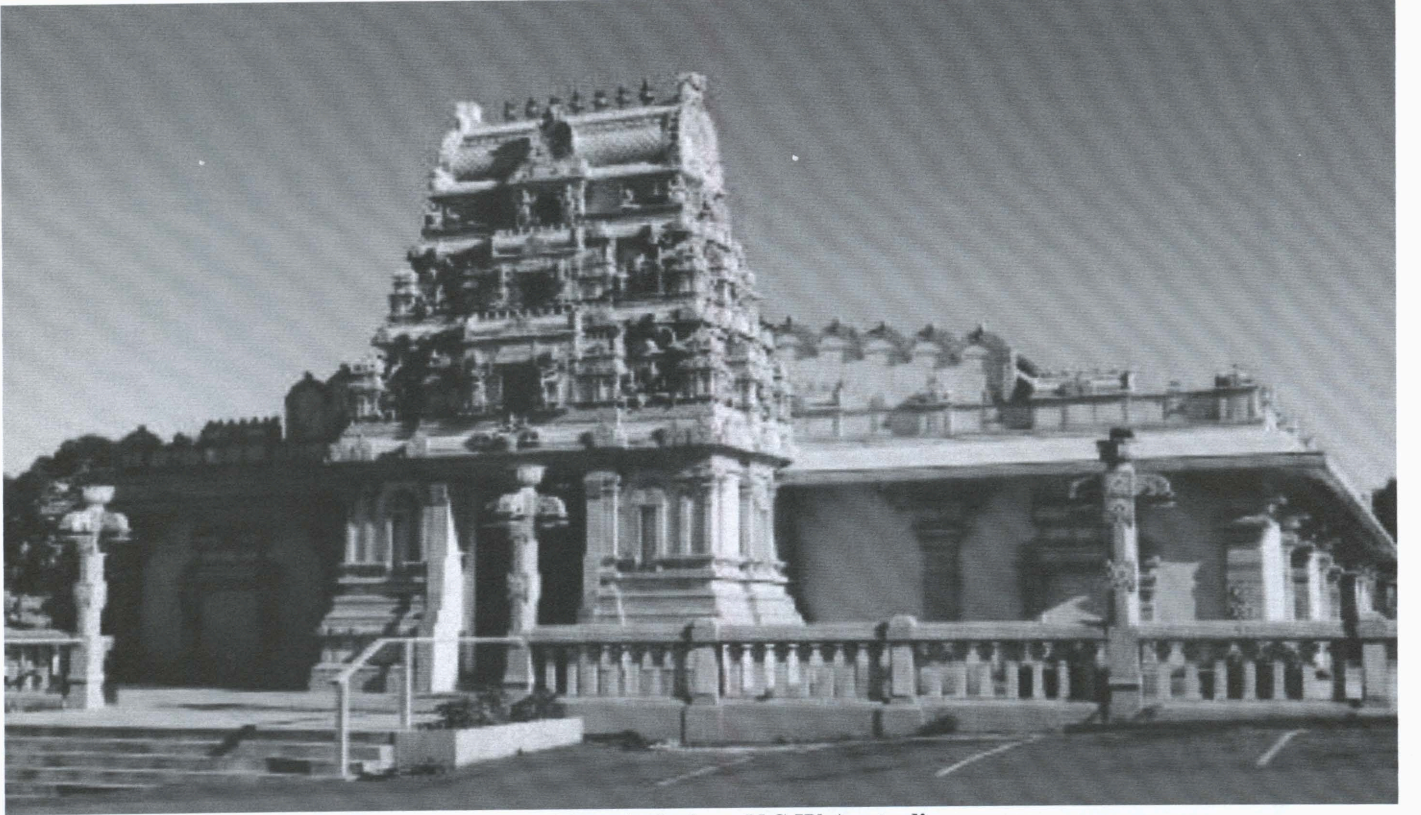


# Path to Dharma

தர்ம நெறி



43



Murugan Temple, Sydney, N.S.W, Australia

Sri Sankar Publications

கேஷத்திர (வயல்) விநாயக ஆலயம்,

ஸ்ரீ முன்னேஸ்வரம், சிலாபம், ஸ்ரீ லங்கா.

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July

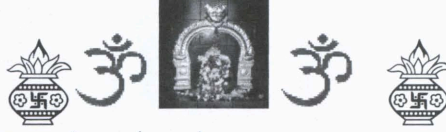
2011

ஜூலை(ஆனி/ஆடி)



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சேஷத்திர (வயல்) விநாயக ஆலயம்,

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Sri Sankar Publications

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Editorial.

The monthly publication 'Path to Dharma', by Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka, is presenting the 43<sup>rd</sup> number this month.

The main imperative endeavor of this monthly magazine is to pass on the vision associated to Hindu dharma basically by replies to the issues put forward by the anxious readers.

The comments and analysis of the readers are appreciated.

B.S.Sarma,

Kshethra Vinayaka Temple,

Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka. July, 2011

### *Suggestions from the readers*

Mr.B.S.Sarma, 'Path to Dharma'

I am truthfully pleased with the themes discussed, in the monthly magazine "Path to Dharma" and appreciate the approach the manner in which the questions are dealt with.

I have sent you some queries for which I expect the answers .Please get me the 'Sama Veda Upakarma Prayoga' proceedings.

With kind regards,

S.I.Kesavan, Australia

14<sup>th</sup> June 2011

Dear Mr.Sarma,

Thanks for sending me the monthly magazine 'Path to Dharma' each month. Most of the explanations for the inquiries are very short and snappy but some are treated in an elaborate manner with the usage of haughty technical Sanskrit words words.

Please give in detail about the meaning of some major mantras, recited during the ceremonies at the temples.

M.K.Dhass, U.K

17<sup>th</sup> June 2011

Dear Mr.B.S.Sarma,

Thanks, you are doing a great service to our religion through th 'Path to Dharma' magazine.May God Bless you and your family.

Siva Sinniah, Canada

Ph; 416 284 9158

23<sup>rd</sup> June,2011

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**1. What are really Rahu and Kethu of the nine significant planets (grahas)?**

According to Hindu astrology, Rahu is one of the nine significant planets (grahas), Rahu is an invisible or astral one, along with its counterpart, Kethu. Really it is one of the two points in the heavens where the moon crosses the ecliptic or path of the sun, the point where the moon crosses the ecliptic moving from south to north is Rahu which is the north node. Similarly the south node is termed Kethu. Rahu and Kethu are portrayed as a serpent demon who encircles the earth. Kethu is considered the dragon's tail and Rahu is considered the head of the dragon and both are supposed to cause general dismay among people.

**2. What is actually the form known as Ardhanarisvara of Lord Siva?**

Ardhanarisvara is literally known as 'half-female Lord'. Lord Siva in androgynous form, (male on the right side and female on the left side) specifying that Lord Siva is genderless and secondly, Siva is All, inseparable from His energy (sakthi). Thirdly, inconsidering idol of Siva the *ida* (feminine) and the *pingala* (masculine) *nadis* (psychic nerve currents) are balanced so that *sushumna* is ever active. The yogi who meditates balances these through *sadhana* and *yoga* attains the status of Siva. In the unity of Ardhanarisvara form of idol all opposites are reconciled. All the duality fades away, back into the one source. This icon represents pure consciousness-satchidananda or parasakti of Lord Siva.

**3. What are the timbers prescribed for the construction of yaga sala for Kumbabisheka?**

Timber of coconut (*Cocos nucifera*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), jambu (*Syzygium malaccense*), campaka (*Michelia champaca*) plaksa, yajna-vrksa, nimba, and patali trees are recommended for the pillars in the construction of yaga sala (hall for the sacred fire offering) for Kumbabisheka (consecration) ceremony.

**4. What is the significance of a sthupi (pinnacle) of a temple?**

The sthupi (pinnacle) is the top most portion which is fixed at the top of the dome (stupa) of the central shrine (garbha graha or moolasthan) of a newly built temple. The stupa is as well referred to as 'sthula-linga'. This fixing of the sthupi (pinnacle) at apex of stupa comes to an end during the construction of a new temple, with the abhisheka of the kumba, which is ceremonially performed during kumbabisheka. The stupa is generally recognized as kalasa. The sthupi (pinnacle) is made of gold, silver, copper or bronze (alloy of copper, zinc and tin). A darshan and veneration of the stupa symbolically represents the god installed in the garbhagraha within the temple. This is for the worship of the deity far away from the temple.

**5. What is the consequence of asana, the posture in yoga?**

Asana is the posture or position in hatha yoga. There are different types of asanas referred to several poses approved to balance and awake the subtle mind and body in favour of meditation and to promote healthiness and long life. Sarvanasana (whole body pose), Padmasana (lotus pose) are the well known asanas. Each asana has characteristic advantages, touching the different inner bodies and realising energies in diverse parts of the nervous system. The hatha yoga can radically manipulate health and general well beings at the same time, it is primarily a preparation for the deeper yogas and meditation.

**6. What is aura or prabha mandala in Hinduism?**

The aura is known as 'prabha mandala' in Sanskrit, which means the 'luminous circle or diptachakra' wheel of light'. Aura is the radiant colourful field of delicate energy blistering in and around the human body. The varied colours of the aura revolutionize continuously according to the recede and flow of the

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person's circumstances of consciousness, feelings, tempers and emotions. Feelings of higher, compassionate conditions create brilliant intensity of light. Feelings of negative aspects show in colour with darker densities. Hence, auras can be distinguished or visualized by spiritualists. The broad characters of auras varies according to the individual unfoldment. Normally it is believed that spirituals and mystic have extremely intense auras, while instinctive personalities are covered in dull or dark shades. It is said that the aura consists of two phases, the outer aura and the inner aura. The former outer aura lengthens outside the physical body and changes continuously reflecting, moment-to-moment panorama of thought and emotion of an individual. The latter inner aura is more of constant character, because it reflects deep-seated subconscious blueprint, desires, repressions and tendencies etc. held in the sub-subconscious mind. The different colours which are regularly and consistently reflected in the outer aura are ultimately recorded permanently in the inner aura. The varied colours of the inner aura pervade out through the outer aura and either shade or become dull with sadness or brightens with happiness in the usual expressions of day to day life. It is proved that the inner aura drifts deep within the astral body in the chest and trunk.

**7. Explain very briefly about the main aspect of the deity Dakshinamurthy?**

Dakshinamurthy is an aspect of Lord Siva, as the universal teacher, teaching the secrets of yoga, tantras, yantras, alchemy, magic, occult knowledge, arts and sciences, ancient history or knowledge of the future to the sages and saints, who are his qualified devotees. He is called Dakshinamurthy; because he does his teachings seated facing the southern direction. The images of Dakshinamurthy depict Siva in his pleasant mood, seated on a high seat, with one leg folded while the other rests on the Apasmarapurusha, the deluded self. The front right hand is in 'chinmudra' (gnanamudra) where the fingers (thumb and the forefinger touching each other the other three fingers are stretched straight) posture of presenting knowledge) and holding the Aksamala (rosary). The front left hand holds the Vedic scripture. The back right hands hold a drum, and a serpent. The back left hands hold a fire. Dakshinamurthy is seen seated silently in yoga posture, under a banyan tree and the sages, animals and plants are seen beneath around Him. The trident is the symbolic illustration of the triple character of nature, termed, sathva, rajasa and tamasa.

**8. What is the significance of Nandi the bull placed in front of the main shrine of Siva?**

Nandi the recumbent placed in front of the main shrine of Siva. Permission of Nandi is required for the devotees to enter the innermost shrine. Symbolically, the bull represent the animal instincts, especially the sex, and Lord Siva riding on it reflects his absolute mastery over it. Nandi, the bull is associated with Siva and is said to be His vehicle. The bull also symbolizes both power and ignorance. Lord Siva's use of the bull as a vehicle conveys the idea that He removes ignorance and bestows power of wisdom on His devotees. The bull is called Vrishaba in Sanskrit. Vrishaba also means dharma (righteousness). Thus a bull shown next to Siva also indicates that He is the eternal companion of righteousness.

**9. What is death, the related rituals and beliefs according to Hindu religion in detail ?**

Death according to Hindu religion is considered as a natural phenomenon of life. There are varied epic stories, sacred scriptures, and Vedic guidance that narrate the reason for death. There are rituals that should be performed after death according to tradition and beliefs. The possible destinations of the souls, after departure from its earthly existence depend on the law and effect of karmas. The ultimate goal is to excel (transcend) the need to return to life on earth. The Hindus believe that after the death soul is reborn, based primarily on their past thoughts and actions. The first mortal to meet his fate just after the death occurs is named Yama. The sacred scriptures of the Rig Veda, which call him King Yama, promise that "admission to Yama's paradise and the everlasting enjoyment of all the heavenly pleasures, include the restoration of a sick body, the maintaining of family relations and the highly desired apotheosis" to all who have been good.

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Cremation is a ritual designed to do much more than dispose of the body, it is intended to release the soul from its earthly existence. Hindus cremate the departed soul, which is based on the belief that the "astral body" will linger "as long as the physical body remains visible". If the body is not cremated, the soul remains nearby.

The cremation ceremony begins with the ritual cleansing, dressing and adorning of the body. The body is then carried to the cremation ground as prayers are chanted to Yama, invoking his aid. It is usually the eldest son of the deceased who lights the eternal fire to the pyre upon which the dead. He circumambulates the pyre anti-clockwise (in reverse mannar), as he walks round the pyre, he lights it which is now an offering to Agni, the fire. After the corpse is completely burnt, the chief mourner performs the rite called kapalakriya, (rite of the skull), thus releasing the soul from entrapment in the body and the mourners walk away without looking back. The following day of the cremation, the ashes and bones are collected and thrown into a river. The death ritual continues for a number of days.

To ensure the passage during its voyage to the otherworld, an eleven-day ritual called shraddha is performed. This ritual consists of daily offerings of rice balls (pandas) which provide a symbolic, transitional body for the dead. During these days, the dead person makes the journey to the heavens, or the world of the ancestors. On the twelfth day, the departed soul is said to reach its destination and be joined with its ancestors, a fact expressed symbolically by joining a small pinda to a much larger one. The soul may never find its way to Yama's realm without these rites, according to the religious scriptures.

The Arthashastra, offers a detailed description of some of the more frightening realms. Those who have been commendable, but have not quite attained liberation through self-knowledge, are sent to a heavenly realm to await their fate. The fate for those who have participated in less honorable thoughts or actions is far less pleasant.

Those who lead a simple life of austerity, meditation and grace can look forward to the possibility of reaching Brahmaloaka. This is the "highest among the heavenly planes" and the dwelling place of Brahma himself. "This is a place of intensely spiritual atmosphere, whose inhabitants live, free from disease, old age, and death, enjoying uninterrupted bliss in the companionship of the deity." There is no need for them to return to earth because they have freed themselves "from all material desires." While they do experience a sense of individuality, they also experience a oneness with Brahma. This is the realm of immortality.

Death rituals that are followed in all traditional of Hindu groups follow a basic uniform pattern given in the Vedas, with minor variations according to sect, region, and family tradition. Most rites are fulfilled by the family, all of whom participate, including the children. Traditionally funeral rites are performed by a priest. A general outline of a funeral ritual to be performed is given below.

When death is imminent, kindred are notified. The person is placed in his room or in the entryway of the house, with the head facing east. A lamp is lit near his head and kindred keep vigil until the great departure, singing hymns, praying and reading scripture.

At the moment of death while the departure of the soul; a family member chants a particular mantra in the right ear. Holy ash and sandal paste is applied on to the forehead, Vedic verses are chanted, and a few drops of milk, holy water are trickled into the mouth. After death, the body is laid in the home's entryway, with the head facing south. An oil lamp is kept lit behind the head and incense burned. A clean white cloth is tied under the chin and over the top of the head. The thumbs of both hands are tied together; the big toes of the legs are also tied together. Later relatives are beckoned to bid farewell.

A homa (fire ritual) is performed with nine water pots (kumbhas) and one large pot made of clay. The chief mourner, the eldest son of the deceased or a nearest male relative leads the funeral rituals. The chief mourner now performs arati, waving an oil lamp over the remains, flowers, are kept around the body. The body is draped with a new white cloth.

All family members apply sesame oil on to the head, and the body is bathed (or sprinkled) with water from the nine pots (kumbhas) which were kept for the funeral rituals and the body is dressed, placed in a coffin. The young children, holding small lighted sticks (wrapped with white cotton cloth and oil bathed), circumbulate the body, reciting religious hymns. The women then walk around the body and offer puffed rice into the mouth to nourish the deceased for the onward journey ahead and the coffin is then closed.

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All the relatives and friends go to the cremation site, led by the chief mourner. Two pots are carried. The clay kumbha and another containing burning ember from the homa. The body is carried three times counter clockwise around the pyre, and then placed upon it. All circumambulating, and all the aratis, of the rituals is anticlockwise. If a coffin is used, the lid is opened.

The body is covered with wood and offer incense and ghee. With the clay pot on his left shoulder, the chief mourner circumbulates the pyre while holding a burning stick soaked in ghee behind his back. At each turn around the pyre, a relative knocks a hole in the pot with a knife, letting water out, signifying life is leaving its vessel. At the end of three turns, the chief mourner drops the pot. Then, he without turning to face the body, keeping both hands behind his body, holding the burning stick soaked in ghee wrapped with white cloth he lights the pyre and leaves the cremation grounds. The others follow. At a gas-fueled crematorium, sacred wood and ghee are placed inside the coffin with the body. The body is carried around the chamber, and a small fire is lit in the coffin before it is consigned to the flames.

All family members return home after bathing. An oil lamp and a vessel of water is set where the body laid. Daily the water in the vessel is changed. During these days family and close relatives do not visit others homes, though neighbors and relatives bring daily meals to relieve the burdens during mourning. Neither do they attend festivals nor temples, nor take part in marriage ceremonies for a period of one year. While mourning is never suppressed or denied, scriptures admonish against excessive lamentation and encourage joyous release. The departed soul is acutely conscious of emotional forces directed at him. Prolonged grieving can hold him in earthly consciousness, inhibiting full transition to the heaven worlds.

After cremation, family members collect the remains at the crematorium. Water is sprinkled on the ash the remains are collected on a tray. Ashes are taken to be sprinkled into the river or the ocean. On the tenth day according to the customs of the family group, the relations gather for a meal of the deceased's favorite foods. A portion is offered before his photograph and later ceremonially left at a suitable place, along with some lit camphor.

On the thirteenth day or on thity first day a memorial service is performed. A priest conducts a purifying ceremony of the house, and performs the sapindikarana rituals, making one large pinda (representing the deceased) and three small, representing the father, grandfather and great grandfather. The large ball is cut in three pieces and joined with the small pindas to ritually unite the soul with the ancestors in the next world. The pindas are fed to the crows, to a cow or thrown in a river for the fish. Some perform this rite on the eleventh day after cremation. When the sapindikarana is completed, the ritual impurity ends.

#### One-Year Memorial

At the first anniversary of the death, a priest is invited to conduct the shradha rites in the home, offering pinda to the ancestors. This ceremony is done yearly as long as the sons of the deceased are alive (or for a specified period).

Hindu funeral rites are very simple. These funeral rites are normally completed with full devotion, according to the customs, means, and ability of the family, will properly conclude one earthly sojourn of any Hindu soul. Religions such as Hinduism offer our own immortal souls satisfying answers to questions of life and death. Their ancient mythic texts provide real reasons for our existence here on earth. They also demonstrate that death is something that can be prepared for instead of being feared. In addition, they offer the possibility of something to look forward to, so we need not dread our last days on this planet. A true Hindu shall love death as he loves this life.

### 10. What are the important Agamas that are followed widely?

A vast compilation of Sanskrit scriptures which along with the Vedas, are revered as sruti (revealed scriptures of supreme theological authority and spiritual value). The date of the origin of Agamas is uncertain. They are supposed to be part of an verbal tradition of unidentified antiquity. Many professionals and experts consider the Agamas as olden as the earlist Vedas, dating back to 5000 BCE to 6000 BCE. The Agamas are regarded as are the prime source and authority for different rituals, types of yogas and the varied temple constructions. Each one of the major sections of Hinduism, (Saivism,

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Vaishnavam, and Saktism) has its distinctive Agama texts of their own, Smartas be aware of the Agamas, but do not inevitably adhere to Agamas but depend generally on the Smriti texts.

#### Saiva Agama

The available scriptures of Saiva Agama give the details of Saiva murthas (idols), impressively theistic. The Saiva Agama recognize Lord Siva as the Supreme Lord, immanent and inspiring. There are in two chief divisions of the Saiva Agama,

i. The 64 Kashmir Saiva Agama

ii. The 28 Saiva siddhanta Agama

The second group (The 28 Saiva Siddhanta Agamas) are the basic scriptures of Saiva Siddhanta cult and out of twenty eight Saiva Siddhanta Agamas, ten Saiva Siddhanta Agamas are of the Sivabheda division and are considered dualistic; and the other eighteen Agamas are of the Rudrabhedha group classed as dual-nondual

- i. Ajita Agama
- ii. Amsumat Agama
- iii. Chintya Agama
- iv. Dipta Agama
- v. Kamika Agama,
- vi. Karana Agama
- vii. Sahasraka Agama
- viii. Sukshma Agama
- ix. Suprabhedha Agama
- x. Yogaja Agama
- xi. Anala Agama
- xii. Chandrajnana-chandrasahasa Agama
- xiii. Kirana Agama
- xiv. Lalita Agama
- xv. Makuta Agama
- xvi. Mukhabimba-bimba Agama
- xvii. Nihsvasa Agama
- xviii. Paramesvara Agama
- xix. Prodigita-udgita Agama
- xx. Raurava Agama
- xxi. Santana Agama
- xxii. Sarvokta-narasimha Agama
- xxiii. Siddha Agama
- xxiv. Svayambhuva Agama
- xxv. Vatula Agama
- xxvi. Vijaya Agama
- xxvii. Vimala Agama
- xxviii. Vira-bhadra Agama

#### i. **Ajita Agama**

Ajita Agama is considered as one of the important script among the 28 Saiva Siddhanta Agamas. Ajita Agama scripture particularly clarifies the various modes of construction of temples, the manner of worships in the temples and the rules and regulations for the installation of various Saiva idols (murti) in the temples.

#### ii. **Devikalottara Agama**

Devikalottara Agama is regarded as one recension (version) of the Sardha Trisati Kalottara Path to Dharma -43- தர்ம நெறி - Sri Sankar Publications - July 2011- ஜூலை (ஆனி/ஆடி)



Agama, a subsidiary text of Vatula Agama, also known as Skanda Kalottara. There are a total of 350 verses in the Devikalottara Agama all of which are in the form of a dialog between Siva and Karttikeya. This Devikalottara Agama deals with esoterics of mantras (hymns), instigations the precise knowledge, explanation of faith and form of worship of Lord Siva.

iii. **Kamika Agama**

Kamika Agama is supposed to be one of the imperative scripture among the 28 Saiva Siddhanta Agamas, extensively available in the present day. The verses on kriya pada (the formal procedure performed in the temples) on ritual and temple construction from the Kamika Agama, are a crucial reference for South Indian authorities and priests.

iv. **Karana Agama**

Karana Agama is believed to be one of the most important scripture amid of the 28 Saiva Siddhanta Agamas commonly accessible nowadays. The kriya pada of the Karana Agama configures the foundation of the rituals of different types of temple carried out in almost all South Indian and Sri Lankan Siva temples.

v. **Karuna Agama**

Karuna Agama is listed as one of the 28 Saiva Siddhanta Agamas. This Karuna Agama is available today and considered as the authority in temple rituals.

vi. **Matanga Paramesvara Agama**

Matanga Paramesvara Agama is a significant scripture among the 28 Saiva Siddhanta Agamas. Matanga Paramesvara Agama is known to be composed of 3500 verses. This Matanga Paramesvara Agama deals elaborately about the temple structures. The Angkor Wat temple in Cambodia is deemed to have been built on the guidance of this Matanga Paramesvara Agama making use of the temple section of this scripture.

vii. **Mrigendra Agama**

Mrigendra Agama is a noteworthy scripture in the midst of the 28 Saiva Siddhanta Agamas. Mrigendra Agama is regard as the first supplementary text (upa-agama) of the famous Kamika Agama. Mrigendra Agama is particularly precious for its jnana pada (philosophical section). This Agama is considered to be very important because of the sections explains in detail on the hand gestures (mudras) practised in the course of puja ceremonies and on constructing the temporary yagasalas of special worship.

viii. **Pancharatra Agama**

Pancharatra Agama is the most popular among Vaisnavites. Pancharatra Agama is largely acknowledged of the two major groups of vaishnava Agama.

ix. **Parakhya Agama**

Parakhya Agama is a supplementary Saiva script. Parakhya upa Agama deals with the mode of temple worship is followed widely.

x. **Paushkara Agama**

Paushkara Agama is a subsidiary text (upa Agama) of the Matanga paramesvara saiva Agama. Paushkara Agama is compiled of 977 verses (hymns). The text of Paushkara Agama is divided into 90 chapters (kantas). This subsidiary Agama is mostly a philosophic treatise dealing extensively with God, soul, and world and mechanics of knowledge.

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**xi. Rauvrava Agama**

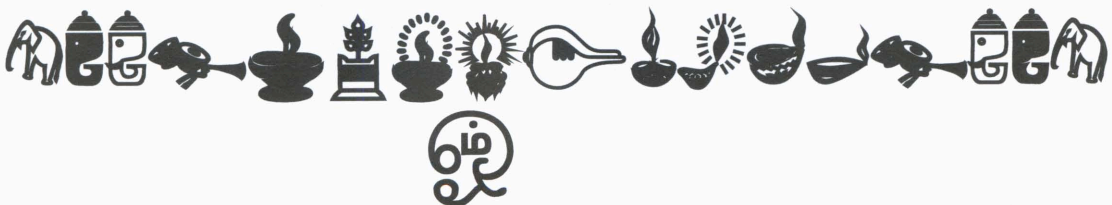
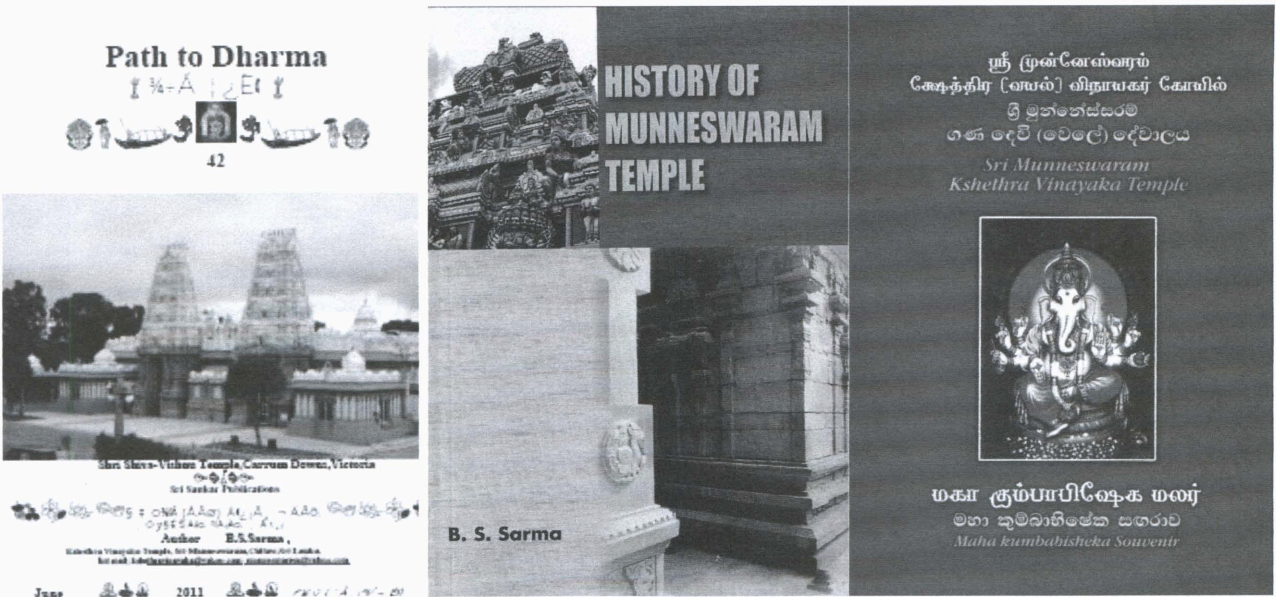
Rauvrava Agama is a noteworthy scripture in the middle of the 28 Saiva Siddhanta Agamas. This Rauvrava Agama was supposed to be conveyed by Lord Siva to sage Rahu. This is the reason for the nomenclature. The sophisticated kriya pada section (procedure of the puja) elucidates the details of the structure of the Siva temple and its annexes.

**xii. Sarvajnanottara Agama**

Sarvajnanottara Agama is not considered amongst the conventional list of Agama and ancillary (upa Agama) scriptures. Sarvajnanottara Agama is thought to be a second version of Kalajnam Agama which is a subsidiary text of Vatula Agama. The sections available reveals with precise knowledge of temple worship.

**xiii. Suprabhedha Agama**

Suprabhedha Agama is a remarkable scripture out of the 28 Saiva Siddhanta Agama. This scripture of Suprabhedha Agama confers the manner of temple worship, particularly personal devotions, religious festivals, practices of the temple rituals and commencements for each stage of life. At present a total of 4,666 verses of Suprabhedha Agama is available out of the original scripture.



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