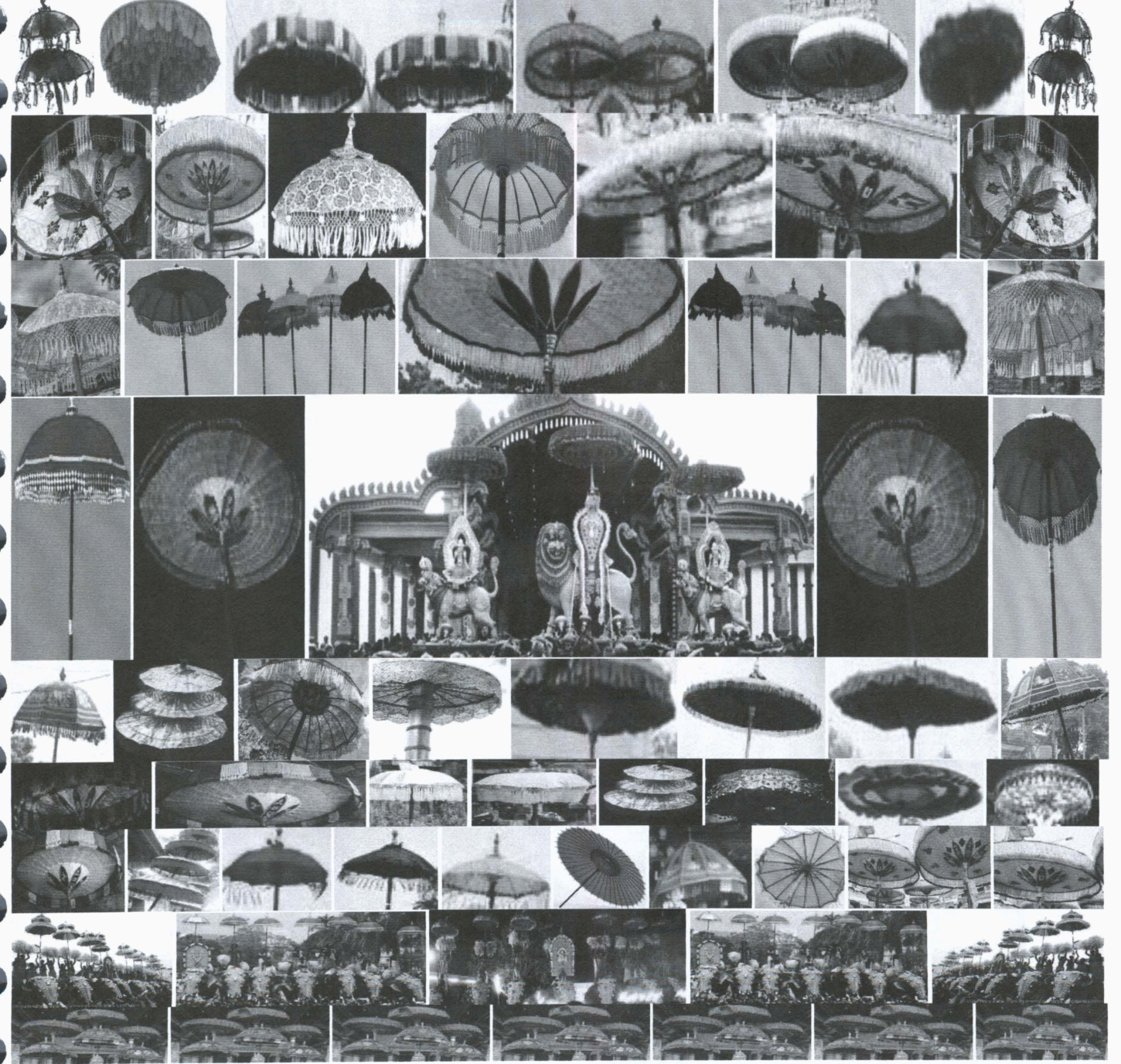


# Path to Dharma

தர்ம நெறி (Dharma Neri)

57



Sri Sankar Publications

Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka.

கேதத்திர (வயல்) விநாயக ஆலயம், ஸ்ரீ முன்னேஸ்வரம், சிலாபம், ஸ்ரீ லங்கா.

Author - B.S.Sarma

hot mail; [kshethravinayaka@yahoo.com](mailto:kshethravinayaka@yahoo.com); [kshethravinayaka5@gmail.com](mailto:kshethravinayaka5@gmail.com)

September

2012

செப்டெம்பர் (ஆவணி-புரட்டாசி)





## Editorial.

'Path to Dharma', the monthly publication by Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka, is presenting the 57<sup>th</sup> number this month.

The key crucial endeavour of this monthly magazine is to convey the vision related to Hindu dharma to the anxious readers.

The comments and analysis of the readers are appreciated.

B.Sivaramakrishna.Sarma,  
Kshethra Vinayaka Temple,  
Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka. September, 2012

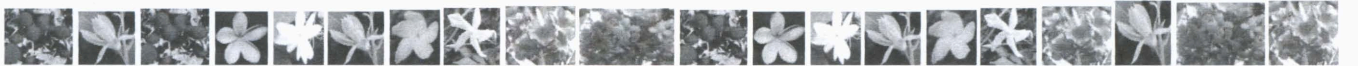
## Opinion from the readers

Dear Sarma,

July 2012 issue of the 'Path to Dharma' (Dharma Neri) was well executed. The information On Goddess Saraswati was thought-provoking. The various kinds of Homams described in the issue have an educative value especially to the younger generation. I am glad to peruse the 'Path to Dharma' (Dharma Neri) of Aug, 12. The information On Brahma and Vastu science are really illuminating. Though in the Cosmic Order, Brahma occupies the first place (since he is the Creator) He does not enjoy the same order of preference or reverence in the people's minds as given to the other two Deities, namely Vishnu and Shiva. I have heard of a fable which attributes this to a curse pronounced on Brahma due to his having uttered a lie. This is really a paradox when we see the All-powerful word, Brahma associated with many other areas such as Brahman, Brahmagana, and what not.

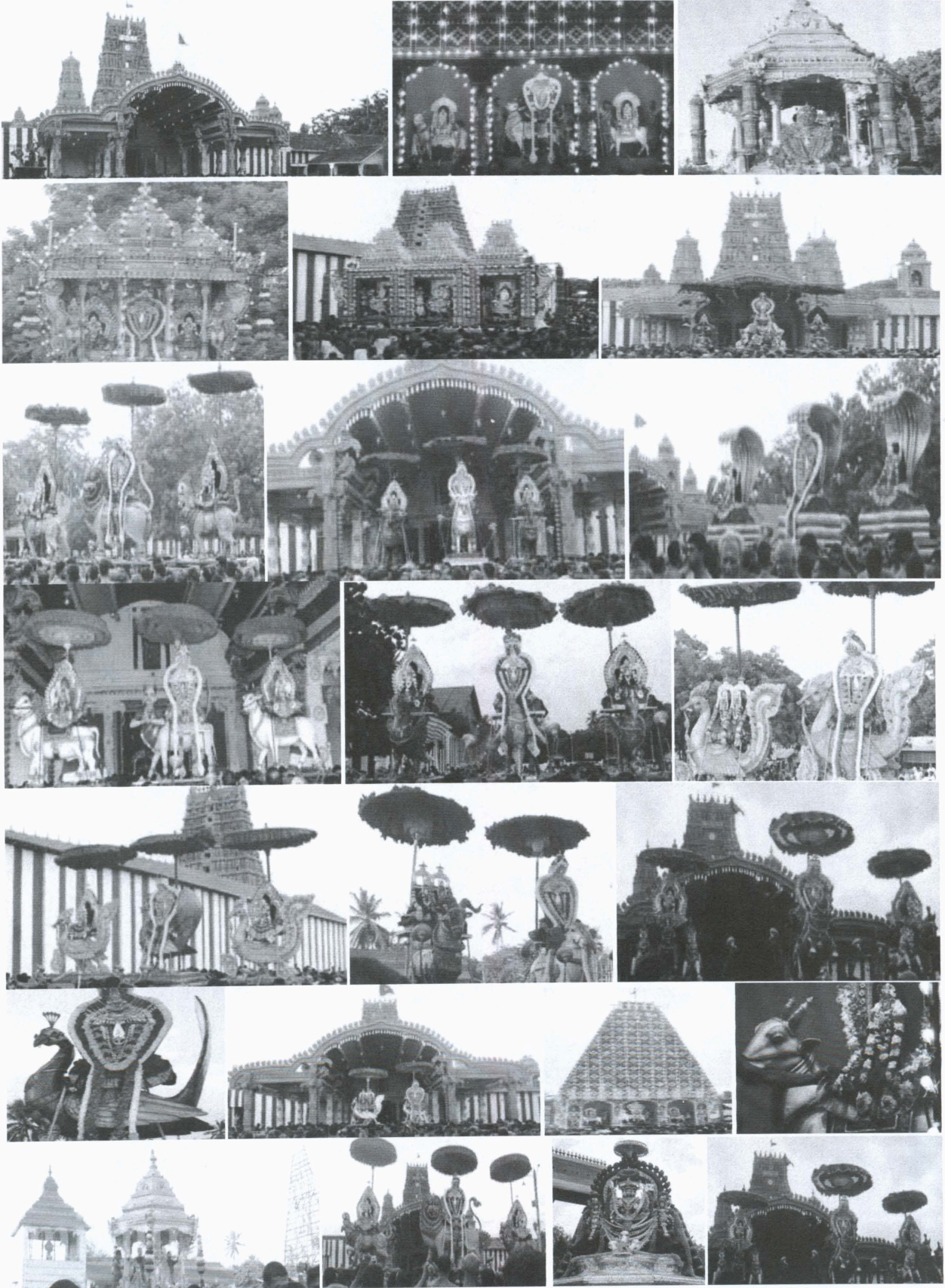
With best wishes,

Sri. V.Seshadri, Lysterfield, Victoria-3156, Australia.

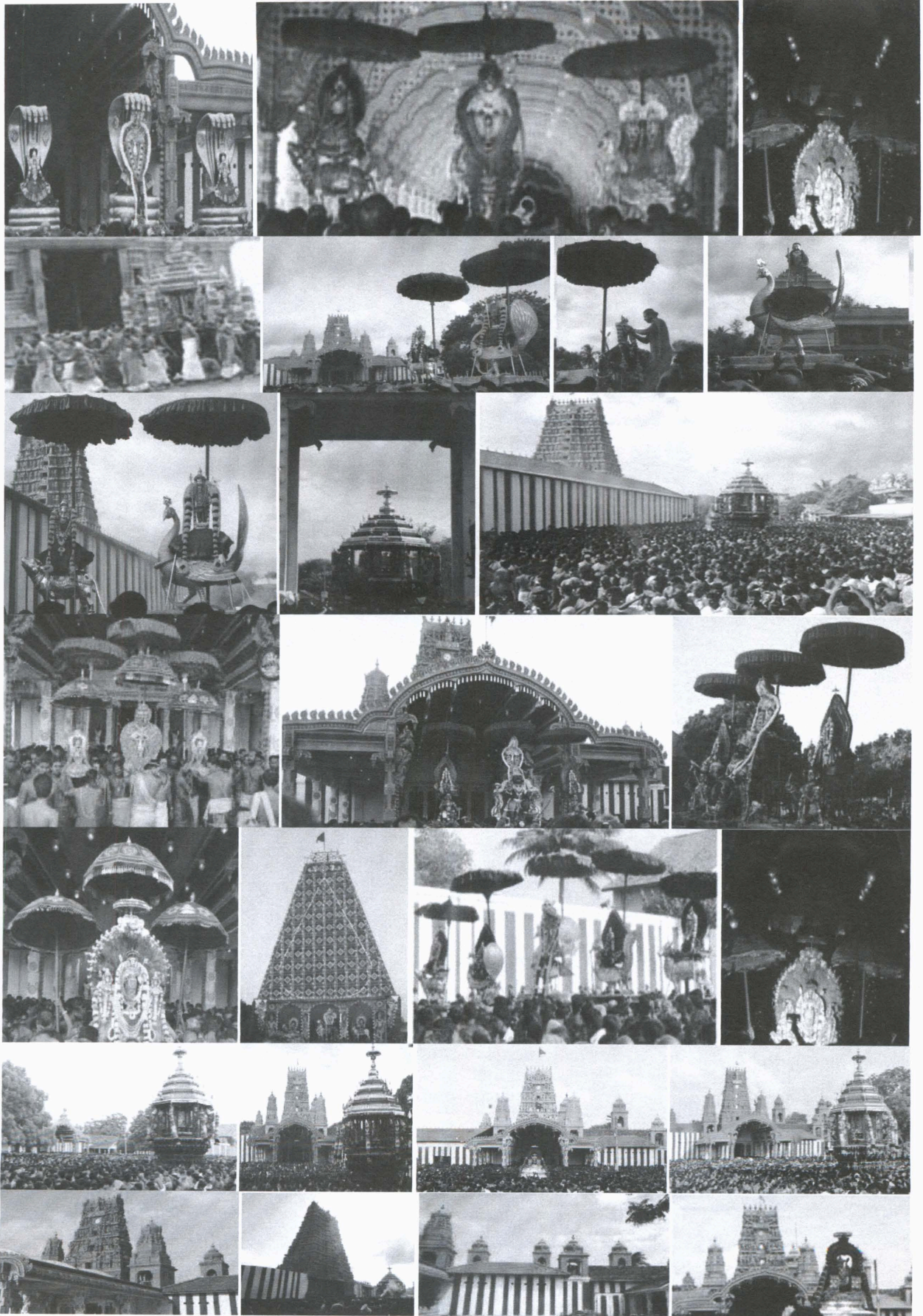




Nallur Kandasamy temple festival 2012









## 1. What is meant by 'Panchaloka vigraha' in Hinduism?

The sculptures of Hindu Gods and Goddess are prepared in a mixture of an alloy where five metals (Panchaloka) are recommended. A statue made of panchaloka (a mixture of five metals) is called a 'Panchaloka vigraha'. According to Shilpa shastras the composition of the metals which form the alloy in the creation of holy statue are gold (Au), silver (Ag), copper (Cu), iron (Fe) and lead (Pb) in the appropriate proportion.

Now for the practical reasons the components of the metals of the alloys vary. The compositions are copper (Cu), gold (Au), silver (Ag), lead (Pb) and zinc (Zn); copper (Cu), silver (Ag), lead (Pb), iron (Fe) and stannous (Sn); and stannous/tin (Sn), copper (Cu) (bronze is principally an alloy of copper and tin. Bronze does not necessarily contain stannous /tin, and a variety of alloys of copper, including alloys with arsenic, phosphorus, aluminium, manganese, and silicon, are commonly termed "bronze"), iron (Fe), lead (Pb) and brass. (Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc; the proportions of zinc and copper can be varied to create a varying range of brasses.)

## 2. Give a very brief account of Sacred Shankha ( Conch Shell ) used in Hindu temple rituals

The conch shell is one of the most important Hindu symbols of prayer, Shankha is believed to be one of the most auspicious holiest item that emerged from the sea during the Ksheera Sagara Samudra Manthan.

In various tantric ceremonies shankha mudra is shown as a sign of meditation. The conch shell is used as a trumpet to get rid of negative energy (evil spirits). It is also used to distribute holy water ( shankha teertham ) to the devotees.

According to Hindu mythology, the Shankha is regarded as a very auspicious item is supposed to be very sacred. A shankha (conch shell) is blown to notify the commencement of various religious ceremonies. Lord Vishnu, is shown with a shankha in one hand.

With regards to Hindu religious tradition every shankha has a specific name as for example;

The Shankha of Lord Vishnu is called "Panchajanya"

The Shankha of Arjuna was called "Devdutta" .

The Shankha of Bhima was known as "Paundra"

The Shankha of Yudhisthira was known as "Anantavijaya"

The Shankha of Nakula was known as "Sughosa"

The Shankha of Sahadeva's was known as "Manipushpaka".

If a shankha (conch shells) is held near the ear, the resonance of the sound softly humming ocean can be heard clearly. This is due to the fact that the natural vibration( cosmic energy) of the Earth gets magnified on penetrating the conch shell.

It is believed that the vibrations emanated from these conch shells can control and overcome evil forces from the Earth.

The type of shankhas (conch shells) given below are considered sacred in Hinduism;

### **Dakshinavarti Shankha(Valampuri conch shells)**

The shankhas that open towards the right hand are called Dakshinavarti Shankhas. These shankhas are rare and are available in white color with brown lines on them that run towards the right or South.

The sizes and shapes of Dakshinavarti Shankha (Valampuri conch shells) varies from the size of a wheat grain to as large as a coconut. These Dakshinavarti type of shankhas are naturally seen in the deep ocean water and are comparatively very rare.

Dakshinavarti shankha is considered very auspicious and reserved at sacred places or the places of religious worship. All the negative energies are swept out of the place. Dakshinavarti shankhas seem to bring wealth and simultaneously get rid of impurities to purify the atmosphere.

### **Vamavarti Shankha (Idampuri, Idanchuli conch shells)**

Vaamavarti Shankhas are the shankhas that open towards left hand side. Vaamvarti, type of shankhas bulge opens towards left side. These are the most generally available shankhas. This type shankhas are commonly used for all Hindu religious ritual purposes. The blowing of a Vaamavarti shankha removes the ill effects of negative energies and it purifies our surroundings and soul.

The naturally existing special geometry of a natural shankha generates a positive field of energy. This is the main reason for using the Shankhas for Yantras. Some astrologers also recommend the types of shankha and the location where these are to be placed to control negative planetary effects in the construction of buildings. Different manners of worship of the shankhas are mentioned in religious scriptures.

### **Gaumukhi Shankha**

Gaumukhi type of Shankha resembles face of Cow. Cow is considered very sacred in Hinduism and so is this shankha. Keeping this shankha in temple/pooja place gives all the benefits (punya) of keeping a cow.

### **Ganesha Shankha**

Ganesha shankha type of Shankha resembles Lord Ganesha. This shankha is worshipped to remove obstacles. This shankha is considered a very auspicious item for protection from evil effects.

### **Kauri Shankhas**

Kauri type of Shankha are a very rare shankha and bring all luck and prosperity. Kauri is an exceptional sacred produce found in the ocean. As per Hindu mythology, "Kauri" was obtained from "Samudra Manthan" along with "Lakshmi" and other rare divine and holy products. Kauri Shankhas were used as the ornaments

### **Moti Shankha**

Moti type of Shankha are like pearls and are very infrequent and intricate to find. These shankhas have the shine of a pearl and is commonly rounded in shape. This is a valuable variety of shankha and available in all varieties of shapes and sizes. It is believed that this kind of shankha is incredibly rare to collect shown that 1 in 15,000 conchs or shankhas will produce a pearl shankha but only 1/10th of those will be a good pearl conch.

### **Heera Shankha**

Heera type of Shankha is also known as Pahadi Shankha (conch from mountains). Heera type of Shankha used in worship of Goddess Lakshmi, in the rituals of the tantric rituals. It opens like the Dakshinavarti. It is found in the mountains and has sparkling crystal like substance in the opening and sometimes on the shell also. Its dull from outer crust but its inner portion shines like diamonds. Heera type of Shankha is very rare, hence it is very expensive.



In Hindu temple religious rituals Sacred Shankha ( Conch Shell ) play an important role. Shanka puja is a part of normal daily pooja rituals. Sanka Abhisheka with 108,1008 or 10008 Sacred Shankha ( Conch Shell ) is an elaborate pooja where at the end the sacred water that were kept with prescribed holy herbs in water is poured on to the statue of the God.

Conch shells are available in all seas and oceans, but very special yoga conches are normally available in the seas and oceans around the unique yoga land of India, as given in Siddha scriptures. The intensity of the sound produced by the conch shell depends on the spirals and volume of the conical shell. The sound imparts a soothing effect, vibrates the atmosphere and drives away the evil forces.

It is said that the conch shells, both idam puri (left) and valam puri (right), are physical representations of life forms that attained high spiritual

The holy divine 'Aum' resonance and other beejakshara mantra reverberation are always present in the conch shells. Conch shells absorb the celestial Veda Mantra Sabda vibrational sonic wave lengths.



Conch shells reduce negative vibrations in the vicinity where it is kept and give calmness to the minds of the devotees present there.

Blowing the conch shell is considered an excellent pranayama yoga practice, particularly if the special pranayama conch shell is selected.

There are specific conch shells for specific worship procedures such as Vaastu conch shells, Siva conch shells, Shakti conch shells etc.

The sacred temple pond in the SriKandeeswarar Shiva Temple in Maanagiri (near Karaikudi) is in the shape of a conch. Conch, shell is a mollusk derived from deep sea bed .

The chemical component of the conch is mainly constituted of calcium silicate. According to the Bhagavatha Purana, the holy Conch Panchajanyam came out during the great churning of the mythological Milk sea (Ksheeraabधि) in search of nectar (Amruta) by both the devils and angels ( Devas and Asuras) .

The inner meaning of the episode, as explained by elders, is when one churns his mind with thoughts, both the good and evil thoughts spring up and when one takes efforts continuously with his Aatma sakthi (representing the inner soul, a representative of Almighty in each) to filter the evils, steadily the good prevails over the evils like the nectar coming out.

The inner design of the conch is so very intricate like that of our inner organs, yet, it produces a sound that is powerful enough to jerk or rekindle us. Similarly, even though our lives are intricate we are skilled of producing virtues, not withstanding complications.

1. To perform poojas (Sanka pooja) by sankaabhisheka (Sanka abisheka),
2. To feed milk to child through sanku (Paalaadai)
3. To wear it as an apparel.
4. To blow it during festivals as well during last rites.

Conch has been revered and held high in Hinduism since the time of yore. We learn from Puranas that when Asuras and Devas churned the milky ocean for nectar, Shanku came out between other holy objects

and was kept by Sri Mahaavishnu on HIS left hand. It is used in all religious occasions - it is blown through its sawn-off point during a religious occasion, at the birth of a baby, during marriage or even before a battle as an invocation to a deity.

A Hindu legend in Brahma Vaivarta Purana explains the creation of conchs as, god Siva took a trident from shri Vishnu and flung it towards the demons, burning them instantaneously. Their ashes flew in the sea creating conchs.

### 3. Give a brief account of the different types of Deepams used in Hindu temples?

**The Deepam ( lamp)** that is lighted symbolizes the luminosity in minds of devotees, that is the soul, which the devotees offer to the Absolute.

Deepa darsana or waving a lighted lamp is an essential component of the upachara. Fire It is considered a symbol of removing ignorance from the minds of the devotees. As a result of this important religious and philosophical aspects several varieties of varied forms of lamps evolved in the rituals in Hindu ceremonies.

The stationary types of lamps of Chola period evolved in to diverse shapes and structures. Diverse categories of lamps of miscellaneous character and formation were suspended from the ceiling (upper portion of the buildings).



Dissimilar groups of lamps of various nature and shapes were created among those that were held in the hand during religious ritual ceremonies to enlighten some concepts and Puranic episode in Hinduism.

Those held in the hand, had the lamp in the front, the horizontal that served as two base platforms. In most deepams the space behind the lamp and the rear base had separate icons cast and fixed and in most cases these parts could be removed whenever necessary.

If the image is a five-headed cobra in the oil lamp, it is known as the **Naga deepa**. The cobra has been a symbol of fertility whose worship in the lesser Hindu traditions was absorbed in the Sanskrit tradition.

If the image is an elephant, in the lamp then it is termed the **Gaja deepa** where the elephant symbolises power, strength, royalty etc.

If the image is a horse in the lamp it is called the **Ashwa deepa**, where the horse is a sign of muscular energy, speed and valour.

If the image is a bull in the lamp it is called the **Rishaba deepa**, where the Siva temples have rishaba as Siva's mount, the bull is a sign of authority, strength and potency.

Similarly there are a varieties of deepas as **Purusha-mriga deepam**, ( an animal with the head of a man/sage). Other important deepams are **Nakshathra deepam, Pancha muka, Saptha muka, Nava muka, Ekadasa muka, Trayodasa muka, Pancha dasa muka deepams**.



The **adukku deepam**, where each platter has several wicks in a circle and then there are smaller levels of platters, always of an odd number with 3,5,7,9,11,13 or 15.

The Kumbha arathi is a pot with one upright wick at the top. The Kumbha arathi is waved in front of the God. A long time ago the Kumbha arathi was held in reserve for the devadasi of that particular temple. This devadasi would sing special songs as she did it and finally place the deepa near Bali peeta close to the dwajastampa (kodi maram). This ensured that the 'evil eye' cast on the deity was removed in this process. The Kumbha arathi is a pot with one upright wick at the top.

Pancha thattu – These are found in Siva temples and used particularly in the evening ritual. They are placed and then shown in front of the deity. Each of them is a metal plate with a wick - Ishanam (North East/upwards), Thathpurusham (East), Agoram (south), Vamadevam (North), Sathyojathi (west). At the centre is one for Sadasiva, this alone is a metal pot with a single wick in the centre. They represent the five aspects of Siva and signify his universal presence.

Kannadi ( a handheld mirror). is twisted in a decorative fashion in front of the processional deity after the decoration is complete, symbolically allowing the deity to admire himself/herself and 'check' if the decorations are in order. The traditional mirrors were polished metal discs with a slender rod for the handle.

Kudai (umbrella) – has long been a symbol of royalty. The winning king always cut off the umbrella of the defeated king. As an upachara, a smaller metal umbrella is shown to the deity. In procession, the sunlight or rain must never fall on the deity and therefore one or even two large umbrellas with flat tops are used. Even in the case of Vishnu when riding a horse vahanam at breakneck speed, a golden umbrella is carried with the vahanam and the deity in temples such as Srirangam during the vedupari festival.

Chamaram – flywhisks come from the manes of horses and a pair is waved on either side during processions. Many of these were in Chola times made with handles of gold.

Visiri – a fan, either a real one of cloth or a ritual one of metal are waved for the deity.

Surutti– or Vyajanam is a teardrop shaped metal or cloth borne on a long rod. The face has the symbol of the deity and a pair is carried on either side of the procession to show the royal status of the deity. Those who bear it are called edupadi.

Vishnu temples had a unique Kurma deepa, where the tortoise had in its rear a handle. The carapace of the tortoise had five small holes through which the wick was inserted. Falsely considered an ill omen, the tortoise is considered a symbol of stability.

Some rare lamps with more of the whims of aesthetic values with unique craftsmanship than a specific textual reference of normal lamps seen in all normal temples.

#### **4. What is Poorna kumbha?**

Poorna kumbha is a metal pot with sacred water that has in its mouth a cluster of mango leaves. This is carried by the host in both hands and shown in front of the visiting dignitary.

Poorna kumbha is kept at the entrance in the places of any type location or site where Hindu ritual of any kind is taking place.

#### **5. What are Ashta mangalams ?**



Ashta mangalam consists of eight articles that carried on a large metal plate or bronze vessel for offerings. Asta mangalyam are prepared in different ways. (1) Rice, paddy, tailed mirror, sandal, reddish kumkum, khajel, Grandha script (book) and washed clean cloth. (2) Nira (paddy), Nazhi (rice), mirror, flower vessel, vilakku (small holy lamp), adorned girl, gold. (3) Paddy, rice, betel wine, areca nut, coconut, jaggery, banana and vilakku (small holy lamp).

### 6. What are srik and sruva in hindu rituals?

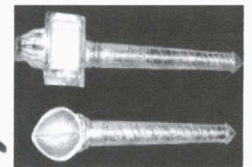
Srik is a spoon carved and prepared out of prescribed woods or made of metals like copper, silver or gold or else made out of alloys like bronze, brass etc. Sruva is a container made like the above. Srik is used to take out of butter oil from the urn little at a time, to pour or to the samith or wood in the sacrifice in the bath (Homa kunda) of the holy agni fire the Agni. Sruva is used to take a large quantity of ajya (ghee/butter oil/clarified butter) and the srik is kept on it when the final sacrifice is done (poured) to the holy fire which is known as 'Poorna-huthi'.



Fire(samith)wood



Tharba the sacred kusa grass



Homa kunda srik & sruva

