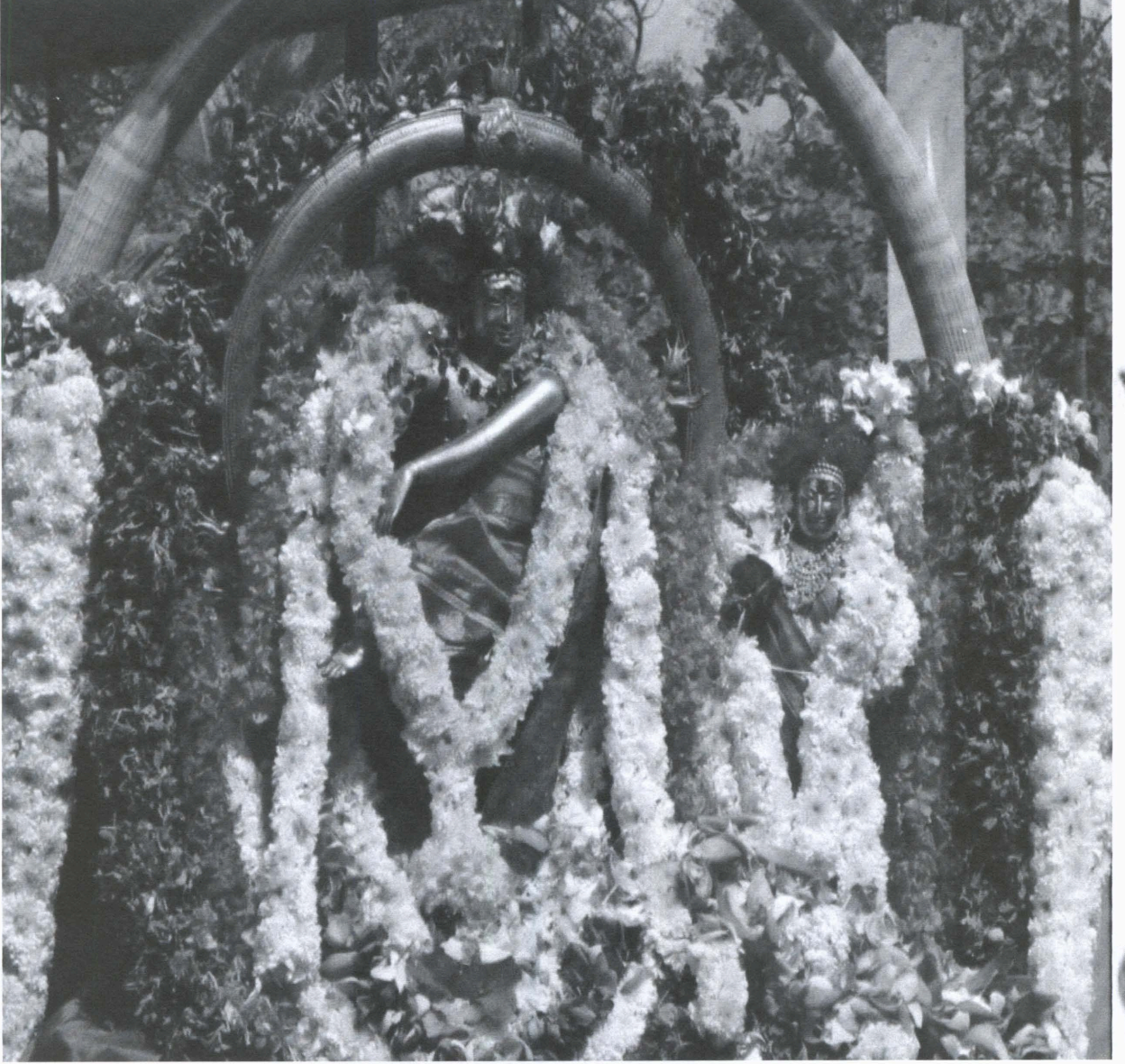


Path to Dharma

தர்ம நெறி (Dharma Neri)

60



Sri Sankar Publications

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திசெம்பர் (கார்த்திகை/மார்கழி)



Editorial

'Path to Dharma' the monthly magazine, published by Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka, is presenting the 60th issue this month. The foremost intention of this magazine is to converse the perceptions linked to Hinduism and its ceremonial rituals, customs and dharma, to the anxious readers. The elucidation and investigation from the readers are appreciated.

B. Sivaramakrishna Sarma,

Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka., December, 2012

OPINION

Dear Sir,

I am very glad to receive your email; soon I accessed the 'Path to Dharma' and I must say that they are very impressive in content and design. It is evident that you've been sculpting them as treasure houses for the Astikas of today and, tomorrow.

I am very happy to have re-discovered the land that has given people like Sri Arumuga Navalar. I realise the land and the people are blessed and the embers of Spirituality are smouldering white hot, even in these times. I feel happy for this development.

With Warm regards & Namaskarams

Natarajan T. S.

03.11-2012

natanasivam@yahoo.com

Dear Sarma,

I went through the Nov issue of Path to Dharma, but could not react immediately due to domestic commitments. It contains a lot of information about RATHA AND RATHOTSAVA. In fact to take part in the Ratha festival is itself considered as an auspicious offering to God. Many people will vie with each other in taking a vantage point for pulling the ropes. The issue also contains information about turmeric and its religious significance for Hindus. Its medicinal properties are too well known to bear repetition. The nadaswaram which is an instrument played on auspicious occasions has unique tonal sounds. Its shape itself is majestic. Its association with NADA suggests its divine origin. The Nov issue traces its origin and its popularity with masses. Taken all in all, the issue is a veritable treasure-house of information.

With regards.

Vsudhevaseshadri, Palavakkam, Chennai. South India

Dear B.S. Sarma,

Read the 59th November issue of 'Path to Dharma' and endorse that it is an excellent endeavor. It was quite a pleasant experience to go through the topic given under the religious- car festivals in Hindu temples. The format of the themes in the magazine connecting auspicious temple car festivals with the superior propitious religious item Turmeric and finally discussing the 'mangala' musical instrument of Hindu temple the Nadaswaram in detail is excellent. The manner in which these three subjects matters and correlated is to be commented. Firstly the description of temple car on the basis of Rig Veda, and the explanation of the religious temple car of Sun god are to be commended. The explanation of different temple cars commencing from Thiruvavur and concluding with Orissa Car festival is to be much-admired. The table given under different categories of temple car is to be appreciated. The descriptions of the musical instrument Nadaswaram, Thavil and the melody are of very high-quality.

Mahadeva Iyer Jeyarama Sarma, Victoria, Australia

1. Describe the famous Nagalinga flower which is sacred to Lord Siva and the details of the tree and the fruit?

The sacred Nagalinga (*Couroupita guianensis*, , Cannonball) Tree, is evergreen seen growing in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and neighboring countries for the past three thousand years at least, as attested by textual records. It is known as *Nagakeshar*, *Shiv Kamal*, *Kailaspati Nagalingam* and *Ayahuma* in Indian languages.

Couroupita guianensis (Nagakeshar, Nagalinga tree) belongs to the family Lecythidaceae and grows up to 25 m (82 ft) in height. The *Couroupita guianensis*, (Nagalinga tree) is the famous "Cannonball Tree" so termed of the similarity of its brown cannon-ball-like fruits.

The Nagalinga (*Couroupita guianensis*) flowers are orange, scarlet and pink in color, and form large bunches measuring up to 3m in length. Hindus respect the Nagalinga (looks like an orchid) flowers as a sacred flower since the petals of the flower resemble the hood of the Naga, a sacred serpent, protecting a Siva Lingam, the stigma. It emanates a strong pleasant aroma.

The flowers of *Couroupita guianensis* is called as *Shiv Kamal flower*, *Kailaspati flower*, *Nagalinga flower*, *Shivalinga flower*, *Nagalinga Pushpa*, *Sarpalinga pushpam*, *Nagamalli flowers*, *Mallikarjuna flower*, *Lingada mara*, *Tope gola* etc.

The Nagalinga flower has a large elliptical (oval) form of structure with short stamens at its base. These tiny stamens appear as a cluster of "Lingams," a symbol of Lord Siva. A structure of a bulky snake head covers the Lingams below as if it is protecting the Lingams. Both snake and Lingam are sacred symbols for Hindus. Hence these flowers are offered at Hindu temples as submission to Lord Siva. Hindus regard it as the sacred tree because the flower petals resemble the hood of the 'Naga', a sacred snake protecting the stigma known as the 'Shiva lingam'.



The Nagalinga flowers do not have nectar, hence these flowers are pollinated largely by bees come in search of pollen; outside the native range of habitat, carpenter bees pollinate these flowers. Both the flower and the fruit grow from stalks which shoot out from the trunk of the tree.

Nagalinga flowers are seen to originate on thick twisted extrusions which develop from the trunk of the tree; these derive just underneath the foliage branches. The extrusions may range from two to six feet in length. The buds and flowers are attached to an upwardly curved, white fleshy disk. There are six petals in a flower, which are large, orange-red, and powerfully fragrant.

Fertile stamens are seen in a ring around reduced style and stamens in each flower. The sterile (barren) pollens are positioned in the anthers. When a bee enters the flower, the backside of the bee rubs against the ring with fertile pollen; this allows the bee to carry the fertile pollen to another flower. The differences in the type of pollens are evident as the pollen of the ring stamens is fertile, while the hood pollen is sterile.

The nomenclature of the tree Cannonball tree is due to the large, spherical fruits it produces. The fully mature fruit falls from the tree and cracks open when it strikes the ground, frequently creating the sound of a small explosion.

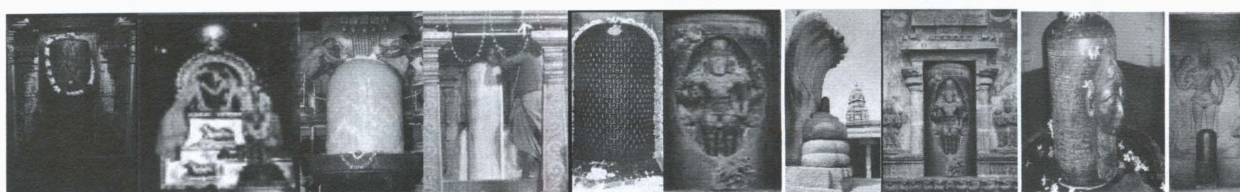
The Cannonball fruit possesses antibiotic, antifungal, antiseptic and analgesic properties. The bark of the tree is used to cure colds and stomach aches. Juice produced by crushing the leaves is used to cure skin diseases. The pulp of the fruit can make germ-free of the wounds. The tender leaves are used to ease toothache.

This tree produce large spherical and woody fruits ranging from 15 to 24 cm in diameter, containing up to 200 or 300 seeds apiece. The fully mature fruit releases a repulsive smell when exposed to the air. This nasty smell emitted by the fruit is generally used as an insect repellent by rubbing the fleshy pulp of the ripend fruit it to the skin or clothes. Every seed within the "ball" is covered with hair, which guards the seed in the passage of the seed through the intestines if eaten by animals.

2. What is meant by Siva-linga in short, exclusive of much technical words of Hinduism?

Siva-linga is a representation worshipped by devotees as linga which means the consciousness in its primordial form, where consciousness is entering in to the eternal energy (shakti) thus Siva linga is the state of god, just before the manifestation of the universe. Lord Siva is worshipped as linga because that the highest of all manifested gods, formless attribute less.

Out of the diverse symbols of Lord Siva, the anthropomorphic icons and the aniconic symbol of the pillar (column) identified as the Sivalinga are the best known.



There are several well known anthropomorphic forms of Siva such as Nataraja (Lord of Dancing), Dhaksinamurthi (the 'south facing form' of Siva), as Guru (teacher); and Somaskandamurthi (Lord Siva with his consort Uma and his son Skanda). All these forms of Lord Siva are installed in niches in the outer walls of the garbhagrha, or in shrines in the corridors and the courts that surround it, but the linga is considered the mulavigraha, the 'fundamental form' of Siva, as being the most abstract as well as the most comprehensive visual illustration of Siva. As a result, linga occupies a place in the innermost sanctum, the garbhagrha ('womb house') of the temples of Siva.

Lingas may be made of various kinds of materials. Those intended for temporary use to be discarded thereafter may be made of ephemeral transitory (ksanika) substances, such as sand, clay, rice, sandalwood paste, flowers or molasses; but somewhat durable lingas may be made of granite, different stones, variety of metals, prescribed precious stones, or approved woods.

Undeniably the substance of a linga may be any one of the, five constituent elements of the universe (the pancabhutas) namely; earth, water, fire, air and ether. Lingas may be movable (cala lingas) or permanent (acala lingas) and they may be manmade (manusa lingas) or 'self born' (svayambhuva lingas). The man made immovable lingas made of granite consist of three parts:

- i. The visible cylindrical uppermost part (Rudrabhaga/ Pujabhaga), to which the rituals are performed.
- ii. The lower parts that are not visible (as it is inserted in and covered by the supporting pedestal) the intermediate octagonal Visnubhaga (the Visnu part).
- iii. The lowest square Brahmabhaga (Brahma part).

3. Give a detailed account of the holy Dharba grass used in Hindu rituals?

The sacredness of dharba (kusha, kusa, Dharbham or Dharbai) grass used in Hindu rituals is enormous as mentioned in ancient scripts of Hinduism.

Puranas narrate that once Lord Vishnu incarnated (personified) as the form of Kurma (one of the Avatharas of Vishnu) the Cosmic Tortoise where the shield of the sacred Kurma supported, the mountain Mandara that operated like a dasher in the Churning of the sacred sea of milk. When the mountain spined, several hairs got wiped off the dorsal side of the tortois. Later these hairs washed onto dry land and transformed to Kusha grass. In a while, when the amritha (nectar of immortality) was formed due to the churning and distributed among the gods, some drops of the amritha fell on the grass and sanctified it permeating the Kusa grass with healing properties.

Another myth explains that when the pot of Amrita was set on the sacred grass, the children of Kadru (Garuda's step-mother) were determined to get some of the elixir. Ever-watchful Garuda, to prevent their attaining immortality, quickly snatched it away. The snakes ended up licking the leaves in hope that some drops had fallen there, but they were so sharp that the tongues of the snakes sliced in two.

Dharba (kusha) grass grows in the places of briny (salty) water such as is found at the estuaries (mouths of rivers). Dharba is a kind of bunch tussock grass growing in a tuft. The edges of the long leaf blades of Kusha that grow in pairs along the lengthy stems are very prickly. When the kusa grass is dried then the straw is termed *durva* or *dharbai*. Dharba (kusha) grass is known as Big cordgrass or Salt reed-grass in the USA, and in Australia, as Halfa grass.

There are three species of Dharba grass.

Name	Botanical	Sanskrit	Common
1.	<i>Desmostachya bipinnata</i> , <i>Eragrostis cynosuroides</i> , <i>Poa cynosuroides</i> ,	Kusa	Kusa, Khara
2.	<i>Imperata cylindrical</i> , <i>Eragrostis tenella</i> , <i>Eragrostis ciliaris</i>	Darba	Dabh, Mrdu
3.	<i>Panicum dactylon</i> , <i>Agrostis linearis</i> , <i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Durva	Dub

Note; Former name of *Desmostachya bipinnata*, is *Eragrostis cynosuroides*.

When the Vedic hymns are chanted, or verses are recited the performer of the rituals needs to wear a ring made of Dharbham known as 'pavithram' on his right hand ring finger.

The *kurcha* ring, made of *kusha* grass, with the apex (tip) without any damage keeps the body of the performer of the ritual unpolluted and clean. The Dharba (kusha) grass absorbs approximately 60% of the X-ray radiation if the person's hand is covered with Dharba (kusha) grass. This holy Dharba grass absorbs any horrific radiation that causes bad effect spread over the atmosphere in the vicinity of the religious ritual.

The number of blades (leaves) of Dharba used in a ritual depends on the ceremonial rites that are performed.

- For the observances or ceremonies associated to death rituals, only a single bladed (leafed) Dharbha is used;
- For the auspicious and normal daily routine religious rituals a ring (pavithram) prepared of two blades (leaves) is used.
- For the observances of inauspicious but not 'death-related' ritual-undertakings, (Amavasya Tharppanam, Pithru Pinda pooja etc) a ring (pavithram) prepared with three leaf-blades of Dharbham.
- For the Prayers and Poojas, at the temple rituals four leaf-blades of Dharbham a ring (pavithram) is used.
- For the rituals like Agni Santana or other types of yagnja (homa) where fire (agni) is made use of the rituals Dharbha are spread all the four sides of the Agni Kundam.
- For the protection of all the food items from the harmful ultra violet radiation during the period of Eclipse single pieces of Dharbha are used

Whenever a religious ritual is held, the initial activity is to perform a site-cleansing procedure known as Sudhhi Punyaahavachanam. When performing recital of selective hymns, Dharbham bunch is held in the right hand and placing the tip point of it over the vessel containing water.

When the Kumbabhishekam ceremony is performed in a temple, a large number of learned Vedic scholars would stand near the “kumba jalam” (holy water kept in the copper or brass vessel) holding a “Dharbam”, one end in their hand and other end in the water would recite all the appropriate Vedic hymns and later do the meditating “Japa”, for the reason that “Dharbam” is a very good conductor of acoustic vibrations. This is due to the fact that Sanskrit is a phonetic based language and “Sound and Acoustics” does really change things.

Dharbai is sharper than a blade. The edges are so sharp, it might even cut your palm if handled carelessly. Only when the Dharbai is wet, one can twist it to the form of ‘pavithram’.

Dharba (kusha) grass was used as a seat during Hindu religious rituals as early as the Vedas.

Puranas and Upnishads illustrate that the Darba grass originated after Samudra Manthan, the churning of cosmic ocean took place. When demigods (‘Dehvas’) and demons, (‘Arakar, devils’) commenced to churn the cosmic ocean of milk, there was no one to support the base of Madhara mountain. Then, Lord Vishnu took the form of Tortoise (Kurma Avatar) and gave the needed support. During the churning, the hairs of the tortoise came out and washed away to the shore. These hairs turned to Kusha grass. When the Amrita, the nectar was finally received, and owing to inappropriate handling of the nectar, few drops of nectar fell on the grass. This further sanctified the grass giving it more healing properties.

The Bhagavad Gita, shows in Chapter 6.11 *“To practice Dhyana yoga, one should go to a secluded place and should lay Kusha grass on the ground and then cover it with a deer skin and a soft cloth”*

Researches on Darba grass have established that this grass can absorb approximately 60% of radiation which is a proof to indicate that this Darba grass has power to absorb all negative radiations in the environment.

Kusha grass is believed to possess enormous purifying properties and Darba is worshipped by Vaishnavas on the special day in Bhadrapada month (August – September) called Darbhashtami.

The significance of Darbha Grass in Hindu Rituals

Purification: In all the religious rituals and poojas this Darba grass is used to purify all the different objects of worship by sprinkling holy waters using the grass. Darba grass is used always in the houses for any religious purification rituals.

Eclipse: Kusha grass is put on every palatable food items in the kitchen to keep away the harmful radiation in the environment during the eclipse.



Mats (seat) made of Darba grass : The mats prepared of Darba grass are used to sit while doing meditation. During any fire scarifying (homas, yagnas) or ceremonies the officiating priest, pandits sit on these mats to perform the appropriate religious ritual.

Kushandika: The sacrificial fire or yagna called Kushandika, these grass are used as sacrificeduring the ritual and at the final stage of the sacrificial ceremony termed 'poornahuthi'.

Darba grass ropes: Ropes made of this grass are used to encircle deities to purify them. Ropes made Darba grass are essential items at the rituals in the annual flag hoisting festival in a temple.

Darba grass Pavithram: While chanting and reciting some Vedic phrases and verses, one needs to wear 'pavithram'(a ring made of Darbha grass) on his right hand ring finger. Also, when a Yagna (havan) is performed, the Kusha (Darbha) grass are placed on the four sides of the 'homa' (havan kunda).

A Dharbham without the tip is considered of no value, as the conductor-type value is lost in it. A Dharbham without its tip portion is not to be used for making a Ring like item known as "Pavithram".

Whenever any function is held, firstly they perform a site-cleansing act known as "Shuddhi Punyahavachanam". While reciting the selective verses, they hold the Darbha grass bunch in their hand and placing the tip point of it over the vessel containing water. Thus the recited vibration values are absorbed by water in the vessel through the Kusha grass. They found that the Kusha grass has the highest value in conducting the phonetic vibrations through its tip. Later, they sprinkle the Holy water at every nook and corner of the place, where the ceremony or function is held.

A Darbha grass without the tip is considered of no value, as the conductor-type value is lost in it. With Sanskrit phonetic sound and vibration, using the Kusha grass increases its value. The usage varies according to the functions.

In the days of Vedic Era, the Hindu Sages and Rishis used to control the magnetic path disturbance by the use of the Darbha grass.

Holy Darba grass was used to cover the vedi (the elevated platform where the sacrificial ritual on fire takes place) on which objects of sacrifice were placed. Simultaneously A large quantity of Darba grass was spread on the ground around the alter for the persons offering sacrifice to sit upon. It was further anticipated that the gods to whom the sacrifices were offered were also present during the sacrifice and took their seats on the Darba grass.

Now we present some quotes from the Garuda Purana as explained by Lord Vishnu.

Garuda Purana Preta Khanda chapter 29 18-19 "Darbha grass is born of My hair and the gingelly seed (Til/Sesame seeds) originate from My sweat. Not otherwise."

During religious rituals, when Vedic hymns are chanted, the phonetic vibrations originate from the sonic energy and absorbed by water in the vessel through the Dharba.

If the darba is piled up for storage for a longer period of time (more than six months), then it loses its value and the power of absorbing the radiation or controlling magnetic waves.

Dharbham is cut from the stem only on the day next to Full Moon (Krishna Paksha Pradamai thithi).

Darbha cleanse us of our sins as it has the incomparability to purify. There are several types of darbha grass that can be used such as Darbha, Viswamitra, Kusa, Munja, Sara, Doorva etc.

Traditions confirm that Brahma exists in at the roots of dharba (thekusa), Kesava in the centre and Sankara in the apex (tip); and other Gods in the four (North, East, South, West) directions.

Great sages as Harita, Markandeya, Atri, Kausika, Vyasa, Saataatapa, Yajnavalkya, Asvalayana and Apasthamba have praised darbha.

The Vedas mention in particular of the significance of darbha: the Acchidra section of Krishna-Yajur-Veda- Braahmama. Reference to darbha is established in grantha scripts, like the ancient texts of Sara-Samuchaya, Smrthi-Saram, Smrthi-Ratnam, Smrti Chintamani, Smrthi-Bbaskara and Vishnu-Purana.

There are several Puranic accounts with reference to Darbha

The references of Darba are mentioned in Vedas as follows;

1. Rig Veda I.191.3
2. Atharva Veda, IX.28.1
3. Atharva Veda, II.7,VI 43 ; VIII.7.20
4. Atharva Veda, II.7.3

5. Atharva Veda, XIX.32.3
6. Atharva Veda, XIX.33.4
7. Atharva Veda, VI.43.2

8. Atharva Veda, VIII.7.20
9. Atharva Veda, XIX.28.1

The Mahabharata narrates the account of the mythic bird Garuda, (Vahana of Vishnu) bringing ambrosia and the serpents getting their tongue teared lengthwise when they licked the darbha leaf on which a few drops of the ambrosia fell.

The epic Ramayana narrates that Rama threw darbha at Jayanta in the shape of a crow.

In the chronicle of Mahabali, Vamana clears the spout of water jug with a leaf of darbhai. Guru Shukracharya had penetrated into the pitcher to block the water from falling down.

The usage of Kusha (Darbha) grass

Garuda Purana chapter 29 (Pretha Khanda) shows the following facts regarding Darba

- i. "Darbha grass is born of My hair and the gingerly seeds originate from My sweat. Not otherwise. The holy sacred thread is an essential item in all-religious rites. The whole universe rests on it. Brahma and the other deities are propitiated when the sacred thread is worn in the normal way. When it worn over the right shoulder and under the left arm the ancestors are propitiated."
- ii. "Brahma is stationed at the root of the Darbha grass. Keshava is stationed in the middle. Know that Shankara is stationed at the tip of the Darbha grass. Thus, the three deities are stationed in the Darbha grass."
- iii. "Gingelly seeds are holy and unparalleled. Similarly Darbha grass and Tulasi too. The three ward off mishaps."
- iv. "The dead person should be enveloped with Darbha grass and placed over the bed made of the same grass. Then it is sure that the dead man will attain Vishnu's region, even without the recital of mantras."
- v. "If the ground is smeared with cow dung and the death bed is made of Kusha grass, whatever charity is given there from dispels all sins."

4. Give a brief description of mridangam?

The word *mridangam* literally means 'clay body', which indicates that it was originally made of clay. The *mridangam* (*mathalam*) is one of the most ancient of the musical drums of India. It is a barrel-shaped drum about 60 cm long with a girth of about 90 cm in the center. The ends have a diameter ranging from about 15 to 25 cm and the left end is a little larger than the right. The shell is now made of wood. A recently discovered ancient Tamil work called '*Pancha Marabu*' prescribes, in its explanation, Neem wood or clay for the shell of the matthalam. This text furthermore describes the dimensions of this musical instrument. The two heads of this matthalam are covered with parchment strained by sixteen leather braces interlaced and passing through the length of the instrument. The right head of the instrument is often tuned to the tonic and left head to the fifth.

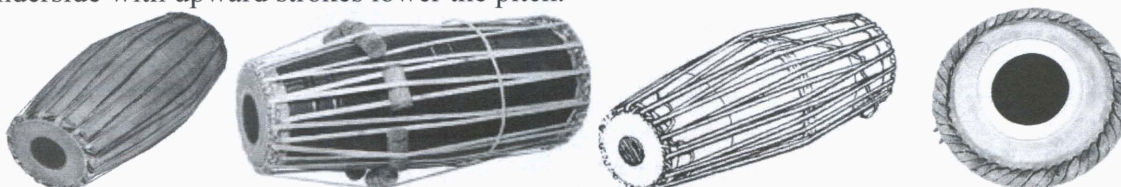
Construction: The mridangam of the present day is prepared of a single block of timber that has been hollowed out. The type of wood selected for the preparation of mridangam is either jack wood or redwood. Mridangam is a double-headed drum, of the shape of a barrel. The two opposite heads are connected with leather straps that run along the sides of the body of the mridangam. There are small cylindrical pieces of wood called *pullu*, positioned between the wooden shell and the leather straps. The pitch could be altered by shifting the pullu.

The right head is smaller than the left head. The right head of the mridangam is composed of three concentric layers of skin. The innermost layer is less visible. The outer layer, usually made up of calf hide, is called the *meettu tol* and the inner ring, made up of sheepskin, is called the *chapu*

tol. At the centre of the right head is a black spot, called the *choru*. *Choru* is a permanent spot made of a mixture of cooked rice, manganese (Mn) and iron(Fe) filings. This is what gives the mridangam its special tone. The left head, known as the *toppi*, is formed of two layers of skin.

The inner layer is made of sheepskin while the outer layer is made of buffalo hide. At the commencement of playing of mridangam, the musical performer applies a thick paste of semolina or cream of wheat at the central point of the left head to reduce the pitch of the resonance and give the mridangam a low sound.

Tuning: The right head of the mridangam is tuned to the main artiste's pitch. Both the heads are tune with the aid of a tiny piece of wood (usually the *pullu* itself) and a smooth stone. The rim of the mridangam is struk from the outside. The downward strokes raise the pitch and striking the underside with upward strokes lower the pitch.



Posture: It is a fact that the larger mridangam, gives a lower pitch and the smaller mridangam, gives a higher pitch. The lower-pitched mridangams are known as *taggu sruti* mridangam (usually range from C to E) and the higher-pitched mridangams are known as *hecchu sruti* mridangam (usually between F and G sharp) in Tamil.

Mridangam (*mathalam*) is a harmonic drum played in classical Indian music and a diversity of tones could be formed from this single instrument. A well-developed system of mnemonics is used by a drummer to remember the numerous complicated rhythm patterns.

The mnemonics type set in Tamil Language for playing *mridangam* can be recognized by computer methods. Each letter, once it is recognized, is first represented by a numeral and then transliterated into the corresponding Roman characters.

A variety of tone qualities are acquired by playing this instrument. This is achieved by striking with the full hand, or by striking several fingers at different places and by dampening or releasing.

Scripts on the description of playing *mridangam* distinguish seven major 'sound words' and four minor 'sound words'. The first four sound words or mnemonics taught to mridangam players today are;

1. *tha*,
2. *thi*,
3. *thom*
4. *nam*.

The convention of representing the different tones of the *mridangam* by sound words is very ancient. *Ezhuthu marabou* is a small section of *Pancha marabu* deals with the sound words as *tha*, *thi*, *tho*, *ta* in section under drums and *tha*, *thi*, *thu*, *tho*, *ki* in the section on dance. The method of forming compound words is also described in detail. Letters that form the sound words are referred to as *vaachiya ezhuthu* (instrument letters) or *vaachiyam* for short.

If one wishes to analyze any sample of *mridangam* words with the aid of a computer, the normal procedure will be to code the different sound words and transfer the data on to punch cards and feed the cards with a suitable program into a computer.

In pattern recognition work, the required patterns will be converted into binary pictures of tiny black and white dots and the patterns stored in the computer as binary matrices. Such digitization is normally done by special equipment.



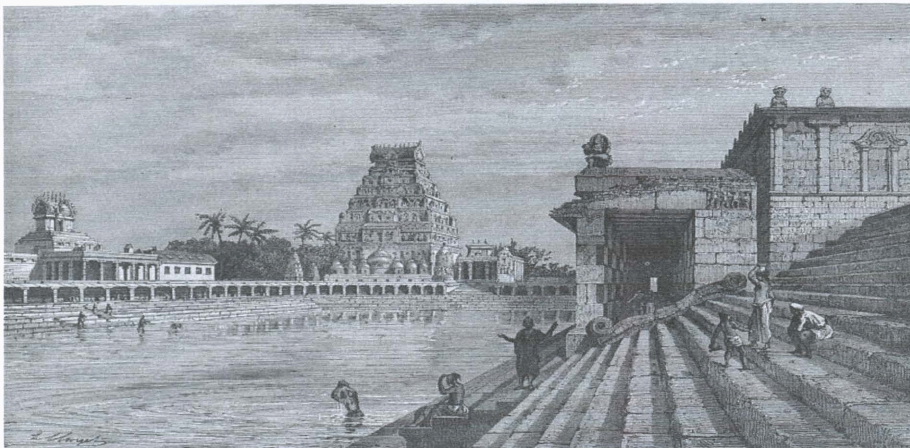
Art by Mahalakshmi Ananthan

A horizontal bar is often marked above a line of sound words to indicate that the tempo of playing should be doubled. A double bar above the line indicates that the instrument should be played four times the speed of *mridangam* words represented without any marking. This is similar to the system of representing musical notes in Karnatic music. However the double line above a *mridangam* sound word is rarely met with.

A dot after a sound word represents a silent pause or rest of one unit. A series of dots below a line indicates that the sound word *thom* should also be played simultaneously. A line under a sound word indicates that the sound word *tha* should be played simultaneously. Lengthening of vowels in a sound word indicates the increase of the duration of a stroke. For instance if the word *tha* has a duration of one unit then the word *thaa* would indicate a duration of two units.

Architectural marvel of Chidambaram Natarajar Temple by mahesh

I've been blessed to visit this greatest sthalam but did not know these facts. Thanks to my friend for sharing this... We all do the mistake of not understanding the sthala purana and other important data before we go to a temple – simply due to lack of time etc.



Natarajar Temple at Chidambaram is living testimony of ancient “Advanced astrological and geological knowledge” of Hindus surpassing to anything contemporary.

STUNNING FEATURES OF EXCELLENCY:

- ❖ The place where temple located is the center point of world's magnetic equator.
- ❖ Three of the five Panchaboothasthala temples, those at Kalahasti, Kanchipuram and Chidambaram all stand on a straight line exactly at 79 degree 41 minutes East longitude - truly an engineering, astrological and geographical wonder. Of the other two temples,

Tiruvanaikkaval is located at around 3 degrees to the south and exactly 1 degree to the west of the northern tip of this divine axis, while Tiruvannamalai is around midway (1.5 degree to the south and 0.5 degree to the west).

Salient features of Architectural symbolism:

- ❖ The 9 gateways signify the 9 orifices in the human body.
- ❖ The Chitsabai or Ponnambalam, the sanctum sanctorum represents the heart which is reached by a flight of 5 stairs called the Panchaatchara padi – pancha meaning 5, achhara – indestructible syllables – “SI VA YA NA MA”, from a raised anterior dias – the Kanakasabai. The access to the Sabhai is through the sides of the stage (and not from the front as in most temples).
- ❖ The Chit sabha roof is supported by four pillars symbolic of the four Vedas .
- ❖ The Ponnambalam or the Sanctum sanctorum is held by 28 pillars – representing the 28 agama s or set methodologies for the worship of Shiva.
- ❖ The roof is held by a set of 64 beams representing the 64 forms of art and is held by several cross-beams representing the innumerable blood vessels.
- ❖ The roof has been laid by 21,600 golden tiles with the word SIVAYANAMA inscribed on them representing 21600 breaths.
- ❖ The golden tiles are fixed using 72,000 golden nails which represents the no. of nadis exists in human body. The roof is topped by a set of 9 sacred pots or kalasas, representing the 9 forms of energy.
- ❖ The arthamandapa (sanctum) has six pillars denoting the six shastras (holy texts).
- ❖ The hall next to the artha mantapa has eighteen pillars symbolizing the eighteen Puranas.

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