

Path to Dharma

தர்ம நெறி(Dharma Neri)

68



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Editorial.

' Path to Darma' the monthly magazine, published by KshethraVinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka, is presenting the 68th issue this month. The main 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.

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Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka. August 2013

Quatations

“ For the building of a temple,it must have a lake on the left (north) or in front (east),and not otherwise. If the temple is built on an island, the presence of water all around is of goodomen”

-Vishnu Dharmotrara Pura, 3.93.30-31

“ He who undertakes the architect’s job without knowing the science of architecture (vastu shastra), or boasts of false knowledge,shall be condemned to death by the king, because he is an ‘enemy of the kingdom (rajahimsaka)’ ”

-Samarangana Sutradhara, 44. 6-8

“ the temple,a work of art by men,is an imitation of divine forms.Only by following their rhythem is it possible to reconstitute them,within the limitations of human ability”

-Aitareya Brahmana, 6.5.27

“The body (akriti) of the temple represents Prakriti,primodial nature”

-Agni Purana,61.25

“Just as a man closely entwined with the woman he desires no longer distinguishes the outside from the inside,so the man who embraces the divine no longer distinguishes between outside and inside.In it he finds his real form,the one that satisfies his desire, the supreme being who is all that is desirable.Desire and pain exist no more.”

-Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.3.21

“Just as in the embrace of his beloved, a man forgets the entire world, all that exists within himself and without,so in union with the Being of knowledge, he no longer knows anything,either within or without”.

-Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.3.21

“ I am the Eros that exists in procreation”

-Bhagavad Gita, 10.28

“Renouncing all virtues, seek thy refuge in Myself alone”

-Bhagavad Gita, 18.66



Puja in a temple

The word Puja is to be derived from the Dravidian word 'pu-chey', (flower action) or worship with the offering of flowers. Some trace it to the Dravidian word 'pusu', to anoint or smear with sandalwood paste or vermilion. Puja ritual or worship of idols of God is a faith and belief Hindu Religion or Sanatana Dharma. Puja is performed in temples in our homes and in meetings before we start our days' programme. The object of the puja ritual is to create thoughts of spiritual forces in us. This is achieved by chanting of some mantras, performing certain rituals and making offerings in three defined stages.

Puja

Puja is a ritual showing reverence to a god, a spirit, or another aspect of the divine through invocations, prayers, songs, according to the Agamas. The most important aspect of a puja is to make a spiritual connection of a devotee with the Divine. Most often that contact is facilitated through an object, an element of nature, a sculpture, a vessel, or a painting. It is possible to reduce the suffering due to the unfavorable position of planets through sincere reliance on God, the One who controls the planets.



During the elaborate ceremonies of a puja, an image or other symbol of the God serves as a means of gaining access to the divine, through which a spiritual connection is made. This icon serves as a focal point for honoring and communicating with the divine. The objects serve as receptacles for spiritual energy that allow the devotee to understand direct communication where flow of spiritual energy in both ways is noticed. This enables one to experience oneness with divinity as we unconsciously offer the self through our material offerings. This energy not only sanctifies the self but also re-vitalizes the body's resources, making one experience.



The Lord being not accessible to our eyes, ears, nose, touch and beyond the ken of ordinary (un-refined) intellect, the ancients devised a method of bringing Lord within the realm of the senses. This method is to worship Him (Her or It) in an object (photo, water, fire, precious jewel, idol etc) which you can touch, feel, smell, see, feel the taste of. Thus all wandering senses are brought to a focus, by belief (faith) and by daily practice. The term puja is now used to include all forms of ceremonial worship, ranging from the simple daily offerings.

In a ceremony of a puja, it is common to chant mantras, sing bhajans and make offerings of fruits, flowers and incense to God. Selected mantras are sacred verses from Vedas that praise God and seek his blessings. In the more traditional pujas, the mantras are recited by the priest performing it. A bhajan is a devotional hymn that is sung by all devotees. Both mantras and bhajans have intense meaning and have a greater effect.



A puja ends with the aarati where a flame of fire or incense is moved in a circular motion before the idol of God. After the aarati,(worship with the flame) all the devotees involved in the puja partake of the blessings by feeling the warmth of the fire.It is important for us to know about our rituals and customs for they were meant to help us lead a fulfilling and meaningful life.

There are 16 Main steps in performing while sometimes it varies here is an outline of them.

Aawahanam	inviting of the Devta
Aasanamam	offering of a seat to the Devta
Paadyam	washing of the Devta's feet
Arghyam	offering water for washing hands
Aachamaneeyam	offering water
Panchaamrita Snamam	bathing the murti with nectar, curds milk, ghee, honey and sugar.
Udvartan Snaanam	offering scented water or perfume
Snaanam	bathing the murti with purified water
Vastram	offering of clothing
Aachamaneeyam	offering water
Yagyopaveetam	offering of the sacred cord (Janew)
Chandanam	offering sandalpaste
Sowbhagya Sutram	offering Mangal Sutra or jewels
Akshathai	offering White rice coloured with Kum Kum
Malai or Pushpam	offering of garlands of flowers or just flowers
Durvam	offering of dew grass
Sowbhagya Dravyam	offering of Kajal, Haldee, sindoor and Kum Kum.This can be offered separately or all mixed together.
Dhoopm	offering of incence
Deepam	offering Aartee or the waving of lights with a deeya (earthen lamp) or any similar instrument
Naivedyam	offering Prasadam most acceptable to that particular Devta or a composition of honey, ghee and sugar
Aaachamaneeyam	offering water
Phalam	offering fruit juices
Tamboolam	offering betel-leaves spices etc.
Dakshina	offering money
Nirajanam	offering a light
Pushpanjali	offering flowers

The object of performing the puja in this manner is to treat the deity as one would a guest, with honour and respect. Though the steps of worship are the same for all deities, there is some difference in the puja of each. A puja always involved with a japa (meditation). A worshipper is required to be pure of body and mind. The Puranas lay more stress on the quality of devotion and good behavior than on rigid puja procedures.Puja originated as a substitute to homa and other Vedic sacrifices



The basic and essential principle behind the prayer is the total surrender to God who fills the universe by His glory and is present everywhere and that without His command even an atom will not move.The rules of puja, in a Hindu temple is given in the three Agamas and Upa-agamas. There are 28 Siva Agamas and several

upa-Agamas. Vaishnava Agamas are five, including Pancharathram and Vaikanasam and have 108 Paththadhis.



It is not necessary to learn all the rules and sasthanas of an elaborate puja before performing one. As an example, an illiterate hunter, Sri Kannappa Nayanar saw the divine after three days of prayer. A young boy Nambiyandar Nambi, while his priest father had gone out of town performed puja in his place at the temple and had the darsan of God on the same day. By understanding these Puranas, we should always allot a few minutes of time to perform puja without any fear that God may punish us if we do the puja improperly. However, it is always good to learn proper methods to perform the puja, even a simple and short one, just like any science or art.



Puranas say that in Kali Yuga, Prabhathi path is the important way to follow. In Sanskrit, Prabhathi is explained as puja. We have puranas which explain how an elephant prayer "Aathimoolam", with a flower was saved and the hunter who was saved from a tiger on Sivarathri day by reaching a Bilva tree. These tell us that puja and prayer to God is essential.

Performing puja everyday at least for a few minutes leads one to develop inner purity and peace. One can perform this puja in a short way or in an elaborate way. This is called "Anmaartha Puja" in the Vedas. One method is to get religious order (Samayadheeksha) from a learned guru to perform puja for Sivalinga or Salagrama elaborately according to sasthanas. Another simpler method is to perform puja for a moorthy as a picture or to a deepa as lamp. Both the above method are of equal value.

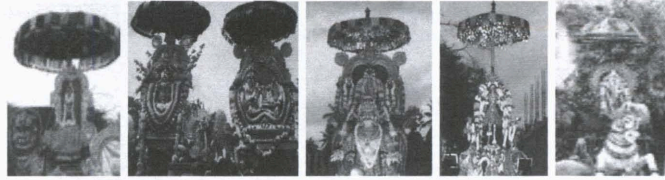
Homa

Homa is a special puja performed for a particular deity by invoking Agni (the God of fire). The fundamental foundation of homa is derived from the Vedas. Vedas, undeniably, contain the highest form of knowledge. The aspiration of Vedas is to guide man through the correct path. The objective of all Homams is the prosperity of the people at large by energizing and protecting the environment. The Sun is considered as the main source of energy supply, and fire is considered as a representation of the Sun's energy.

According to the ancient texts on homa, any offer to fire as a God, is actually an offer to sun. Any offer to fire is either to enrich energy in the environment or to destroy the undesirable elements in the environment, and thus, in both ways, environment is protected. Attaching divine nature to such rituals (like homam) induced people to practice them. Thus, the ancient texts declare that "Such Vaidika Karmams are result-oriented, and meant to lead to spiritual attainments".

Every homa is performed according to the prescribed scriptures. Homams are conducted by learned and experienced Vedic scholars well versed in that particular field of study. The ingredients required for these homams are different for each homams.

Ganapathy Homam is one where Lord Ganesha is always worshipped before starting any other Homa. Lord Ganesha removes all obstacles



Maha Mrityunjaya Homam is dedicated to Lord Siva to avoid untimely death. The Mrityunjaya Homa is performed to achieve Jaya or Victory over Mritya or death. Mrityunjaya Homa is performed for longevity, on birthdays, for extending life time, for cure for chronic illness and healthy life.



Navagraha Homam is a special type of Homa performed to the nine celestial bodies. The term navagraha denotes the nine celestial bodies which are central to astrological calculations. The sun, the moon, mars, mercury, jupiter, venus, saturn and the two shadow planets Rahu and Ketu constitute the navagrahas. The nine planets in our horoscope control our karma, our desires and their outcomes. Each one of these nine planets exerts their own an influence in our lives, which is called "dasa" and it, can be known from one's horoscope. Navagraha puja is performed to diminish the negative effects and to recover the positive energies related to a person. The bad periods of Grahas of a person can be appeased by performing the graha shanti puja.

Nakshatra Puja is very important in our lives Vedic astrology considers Nakshtra to be the important aspect of our lives. Nakshatra indicates our attitude, even our physical appearance and our future. It is said in our vedas that Nakshta puja to be performed during the bad period of time of unfavorable planetary positions calculated from our birth chart.

Total Nakshatras for Rahshis

Mesham (Aries)	-	Aswini, Bharani, Krithigai Nakshatras
Vrishabh (Taurus)	-	Krithigai, Rohini, Mrigasrisham Nakshatras
Mithuna (Gemini)	-	Mrigasrisham, Thiruvadri, Punarpoosam Nakshatras
Karka (Cancer)	-	Punarpoosam, Poosam, Aailyam Nakshatras
Singha (Leo)	-	Magham, Pooram, Uttiram Nakshatras
Kanya (Virgo)	-	Uttiram, Hastham, Chithirai Nakshatras
Tula (Libra)	-	Chithirai, Swadhi, Visagam Nakshatras
Vrischika (Scorpio)	-	Visagam, Anusham, Katteai Nakshatras
Dhanu (Saggittarius)	-	Moolam, Pooradam, Uttiradam Nakshatras
Makra (Capricorn)	-	Uttiradam, Thiruvonam, Avittam
Kumbha (Aquarius)	-	Avittam, Satayam, Pooratadhi Nakshatras
Meena (Pisces)	-	Pooratadhi, Uttiratadhi, Revati

Ayusha Homa - This is the homa performed for the worship of the god of life (Ayur Devatha). One gets long life blessings from Ayur devatha by conducting this homa. If a child is constantly ill, this homa could be performed on the day of the star (Nakshaktra) in which the child is born. It is started on the day the child completes one year of age. By doing this homa, the child gets long life blessings from Ayur devatha. Ones a year this homa is recommended for healthy living and long life.