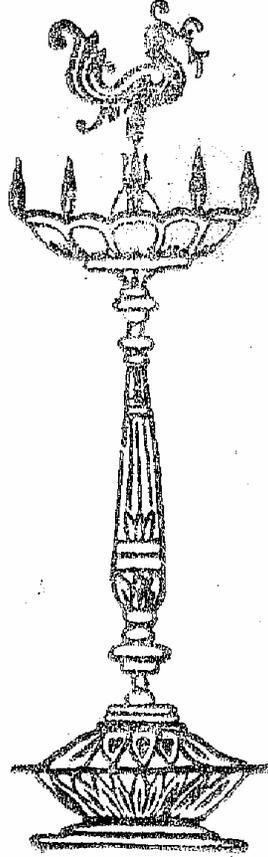


CHAPTER ONE



SLOKAS

(PRAYERS)

LORD GANESHA



गजाननं भूतगणादिसेवितं कपित्थजम्बूफलसारभक्षितम् ।
उमासुतं शोकविनाशकारणं नमामि विघ्नेश्वर पादपङ्कजम् ॥

१.

*Gajaananam bhoota-ganaadi-sevitam Kapittha-jambu-phalasaara-bhakshitam
Uma-sutam shoka-vinaasha-kaaranam namaami vigneshvara paada-pankajam.*

Meaning:

He who has the face of an elephant, one who is worshipped by the Bhootha ganam, He who eats the essence of kapitha and Jumbu fruits, He who is the son of Uma Devi (Parvati) and He who alleviates the ill feelings in us. O! Lord Vigneshvara (Ganesha, the Lord of obstacles) who is an embodiment of all the above, we offer our namaskarams (salutations) at your divine feet.

यस्य द्विरदवक्त्राद्याः पारिषद्याः परश्शतम् ।
विघ्नं निघ्नन्ति सततं विश्वक्सेनं तमाश्रये ॥

२.

*Yasya dviradavakraadyaah-paarishadyaah-parah-shatam
Vignam nighnanti satatam vishvakse nam tamaashraye.*

2.

Meaning:

I also surrender at the feet of **Vishvakse na** (Ganesha) who always removes all hindrances and whose repute is widespread in innumerable assemblies and more by his being prayed to constantly.

Ganesha as Vishvakse na (the all-conquering) is sometimes shown with four hands, wearing Shankha, Chakra and Gada in three hands and the fourth exhibiting the Tarjanimudra (threatening finger pose). The right leg is usually shown hanging down from the pedestal.

Ganesha/Vishvakse na is worshipped at the beginning of any undertaking, to avoid obstacles. We begin the Vishnu Sahasranaama stotram (prayer with 1000 names of Vishnu) with Ganesha prayers, Shukhlaam bharadharam vishnum... and the above 2nd sloka.

GODDESS SARASVATI

Om Sri Sarasvatyai namaha.



या कुंदेंदु तुषार हार धवला याशुभ्र वस्त्रावृता
 या वीणावर दंडमंडित करा या श्वेत पद्मासना ।
 या ब्रह्माच्युत शंकर प्रभृतिभिः देवैः सदा वंदिता
 सा मां पातु सरस्वती भगवती निःशेषजाड्या पहा ॥ १.

Gayatri

ॐ वाक्देव्यै च विदमहे ब्रह्म पत्न्यै च धीमहि ।
 तन्नः सरस्वतीप्रचो दयात् ॥ २.

*Yaa kundendu tushaara-haara-dhavalaa yaa shubhra-vastraa-vritaa
 Yaa veenaa-varadanda mandita-karaa yaa shveta padmaasanaa
 Yaa brahmaachyuta shankara prabhritibhir devaih-sadaa vanditaa
 Saa maam paatu sarasvatee bhagavatee nih-shesha-jaadyaa-pahaa. 1.*

Gayatri

*Om Vaakdevyai cha Vidmahe Brahmapatnai cha Dheemahi
 Tannah Sarasvatee Prachodayaat. 2.*

Meaning:

1. The one, who is dazzlingly white as the kundha flower, the moon, or a snow flake, who is robed in bright white clothes, who is adorned with the hands holding the veena, who is seated in a white lotus, who is worshipped by all gods including Brahma, Achyuta (Vishnu) and Shankara (Shiva), may that Goddess Sarasvati, the dispeller of ignorance, protect me.
2. Om! We meditate on the consort of Brahma, the goddess of speech, may Sarasvati brighten our intellect.

GODDESS LAKSHMI

Om Sri Mahaalakshmyai namaha.



लक्ष्मीं क्षीरसमुद्रराजतनयां श्रीरङ्गधामेश्वरीं
दासीभूत-समस्त-देवनितां लोकैकदीपांकुराम् ।
श्रीमन्मन्द कटाक्षलब्धविभव ब्रह्मेन्द्रगंगाधरां
त्वां त्रैलोक्यकुटुंबिनीं सरसिजां वन्दे मुकुन्दप्रियाम् ॥

१.

*सरसिजनयने सरोजहस्ते धवलतरांशुक-गन्धमात्य-शोभे ।
भगवति हरिवल्लभे मनोज्ञे त्रिभुवनमूतिकरि प्रसीद मह्यम् ॥

२.

Gayatri

ॐ महादेव्यै च विद्महे विष्णुपत्न्यै च धीमहि ।
तन्नो लक्ष्मीः प्रचोदयात् ॥

३.

*Lakshmeem Ksheerasamudra-raaja-tanayaam shreeranga-dhaameshvareem
Daaseebhoota-samasta-devavanitaam lokaika-deepaankuraam
Shreemanmanda kataaksha-labdha-vibhava brahmendra-gangaadharaam
Tvaam trailokya-kutumbineem sarasijaam vande mukundapriyaam.*

1.

*Sarasijanayane sarojahaste dhavalataraam-shuka-gandhamaalya-shobhe
Bhagavati harivallabhe manojne tribhuvanabhootikari praseeda mahyam.*

2.

Gayatri

*Om Mahaadevyai cha Vidmahe Vishnupatnyai cha Dheemahi
Tanno Lakshmeeh Prachodayaat.*

3.

Meaning:

1. Goddess Lakshmi, who is the daughter of the king of the ocean of milk, who is the Goddess of Sriranga (Vishnu), who is served by all the goddesses in heaven, who is the guiding light of the world, who has the glory of blessing of Brahma, Indra and Gangadhar (Shiva), who has taken on with care all the three worlds as her family, who appeared on a lotus and who is the beloved of Mukunda (Vishnu) – I salute you.

2. Goddess Lakshmi, who has lotus eyes, who has lotus in her hands, who has silken robe and shines with fragrant garland, the goddess, the consort of Hari (Vishnu), who knows our mind, who makes all the three worlds prosperous, please be graceful to me.
3. Om! We meditate on the consort of Vishnu, the great goddess, may Lakshmi grant us wealth and prosperity.

GODDESS DURGA

Om Sri Durgaayai namaha.



सर्वस्वरूपे सर्वेशे सर्वशक्तिसमन्विते ।
भयेभ्यस्त्राहि नो देवि दुर्गे देवि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ १.

नमस्ते शरण्ये शिवे सानुकम्पे नमस्ते जगद्व्यापिके विश्वरूपे ।
नमस्ते जगद्वन्द्यपादारविन्दे नमस्ते जगत्तारिणि त्राहि दुर्गे ॥ २.

Sarvaswaroope sarveshe sarvashaktisamanvite
Bhaye-bhayastrahi no devi durge devi namostute 1.

Namaste sharanye shive saanukampe
Namaste jagadvyaapike vishvaroope
Namaste jagadvandya-paadaaravinde
Namaste jagattaarini traahi durge. 2.

Meaning:

1. My salutations to you, O Durga Devi, you are the personification of all forms, the goddess of all, possessor of all energy, kindly protect us from all fears.
2. Salutations to Durga Devi who is sharanya, shive (consort of Shiva who is auspicious) and kind; Salutations to you who is the whole universe and has the vishvaroope (magnificent form); Salutations to you who has the feet that is worshipped by all in this world; Salutations to you who protects this world from all dangers, O Durga Devi protect us.

LORD VISHNU

Om Namo Naaraayanaaya.



नमस्समस्तभूतानां आदिभूताय भूभृते ।
अनेकरूपरूपाय विष्णवे प्रभविष्णवे ॥

१.

सशङ्खचक्रं सकिरीटकण्डलं
सपीतवस्त्रं सरसीरुहेक्षणम् ।
सहारवक्षस्थल शोभिकौस्तुभं
नमामि विष्णुं शिरसा चतुर्भुजम् ॥

२.

*Namah samastabhootaanaam aadibhootaaya bhoobhrute
Aneka rooparoopaaya vishnave prabhavishnave*

1.

*Sashankhachakram sakireetakundalam sapeetavastram saraseeruhekshanam
Sahaaravakshasthala shobhikaustubham namaami vishnum shirasaa
chaturbhujam 2.*

Meaning:

1. Salutation to Lord Vishnu, the origin of all living beings and the sustainer of the world, the one with many forms, who is all pervasive and who is self-fulgent.
2. I salute to that Lord Vishnu bowing down my head, who is four armed, who is sporting the shankha=conch (Panchajanya), the chakra=discus (Sudarshana), the crown and ear drops, who is robed with yellow clothes, who has eyes like lotus, whose chest is decorated with the Kaustubha gem and is also adorned with garlands.

LORD NARASIMHA



ॐ उग्रं वीरं महाविष्णुं ज्वलन्तं विश्वतोमुखम् ।
 नृसिंहं भीषणं भद्रं मृत्युमृत्युं नमाम्यहम् ॥

१.

Gayatri

ॐ नृसिंहाय विद्महे वज्रनखाय धीमहि ।
 तन्नः सिंहः प्रचोदयात् ॥

२.

*Om Ugram veeram mahaavishnum jvalantam vishvatomukham
 Nrisimham bheeshanam bhadram mrityumrityum namaamyaham.*

1.

Gayatri

*Om Nrisimhaaya Vidmahe Vajranakhaaya Dheemahi
 Tannah Simhah Prachodayaat.*

2.

Meaning:

1. Salutations to Lord Narasimha who is ferocious towards the demon Hiranyakasipu, who is brave, the great Lord who is all pervasive, who appeared like flames of fire in front of the demon, whose face contain all gods (devas), who removes all fear including the fear of death and who gives immortality.
2. Om! We meditate on Lord Narasimha, the lion-faced God whose nails are sharp and strong like iron, may he inspire us.

It is very important that one should say this mantra without any error and with utmost purity of one's mind, body and soul.

LORD HYAGREEVA



ज्ञानानन्द मयं देवं निर्मल स्फटिका कृतिं ।
आधारं सर्व विद्यानां हयर्ग्विं उपास्महे ॥

१.

ॐ वागीश्वराय विद्महे हयग्रीवाय धीमहि ।
तन्नो हंसः प्रचोदयात् ॥

२.

*Gyaanaanandamayam devam nirmala spadikaakruthim
Aadaaram sarva vidyaanaam Hyagreevam upaasmahe.*

1.

Gayatri

*Om Vaageeshvaraaya Vidmahe Hayagreevaaya Dheemahi
Tanno Hamsah Prachodayaat.*

2.

Meaning:

1. Vidyaarambam-studies begin with a prayer to Sri Hyagreeva (Lord with the horse's face/neck), who is the presiding deity for all knowledge. We pray to him to bless us with all the knowledge.
2. Om! We meditate on Lord Hyagreeva, the horse-faced God who is the Lord of speech, may he inspire us.

Lord Hyagreeva is another form of Lord Vishnu.

He is the god of learning, akin to goddess Sarasvati.

Two demons Madhu and Kaitabha had stolen the Vedas and hidden them under water. Lord Vishnu took the form of Hyagreeva, dived to the bottom of the ocean and rescued them after killing the demons.

He is shown in the human form, with the horse's head, possessing four or eight arms, carrying the various weapons and emblems of Vishnu.

LORD SHIVA

Om namah Shivaaya.



कर्पूर गौरं करुणावतारं संसार सारं भुजगेन्द्रहारं ।
सदा वसन्तं हृदयार विन्दे भवं भवानी सहितं नमामि ॥

*Karpooora-gauram karuna-avataaram samsaara-saaram bhujagendra-haaram
Sadaa-vasantam hridaya-aravinde bhavam bhavaanee-sahitam namaami.*

Meaning:

I salute to that Ishvara along with Bhavani (Shiva and Parvati) who is as white as Karpoor (camphor), an incarnation of compassion, the essence of this world, who wears a bhujagendra (snake or serpent) around his neck and is ever present in the lotus abode of our hearts.

LORD DAKSHINAMURTI (GURU)

Shree Gurubhyo namaha.



मौनव्याख्या प्रकटित परब्रह्मतत्त्वं युवानं
वर्षिष्ठांते वसद् ऋषिगणैः आवृतं ब्रह्मनिष्ठैः ।
आचार्येन्द्रं करकलित चिन्मुद्रमानंदमूर्तिं
स्वात्मारामं मुदितवदनं दक्षिणामूर्तिमीडे ॥

१.

**Mauna-vyaakhyaa-prakattita-parabrahma-tatvam yuvaanam
Varshishtthaan-teva-sad-rishi-ganair-aavritam brahma-nishtthaihi
Achaaryendram karakalita-chinmudram-aanandaroopam
Svaatmaa-raamam mudita-vadanam dakshinaamoorti-meede.**

1.

Meaning:

I praise Lord Dakshinamurti, the ageless one, who expounded the truth of non-dual Brahman through silence, who is surrounded by aged disciples, who ever abides in Brahman, who is the best among teachers, whose hand is held in the gesture of chin-mudra (jnana mudra), who is the embodiment of joy, who revels in himself, and who has a smiling countenance.

गुकारो अन्धकारो वै रुकारस्तन्निवर्तकः ।
अन्धकारनिरोधित्वात् गुरुरित्यभिधीयते ॥

२.

**Gukaaro-andhakaarovai rukaaras-tannivartakaha
Andhakaara-nirodhitvaat gurur-ityabhidheeyate.**

2.

Meaning:

The syllable "gu" stands for darkness (of ignorance), "ru" represents its remover. A guru is so called because he removes the darkness (of ignorance).

न गुरोरधिकं तत्त्वं न गुरोरधिकं तपः ।
न गुरोरधिकं ज्ञानं तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

३.

**Na Gurordhikam tatvam na gurordhikam tapaha
Na gurordhikam jnaanam tasmai shreegurave namaha.**

3.

Meaning:

Salutations to that respected Guru, as there is no truth greater than Guru, no greater penance than Guru and no greater knowledge than Guru.

ध्यानमूलं गुरोरमूर्तिः पूजामूलं गुरोः पदम् ।
मंत्रमूलं गुरोर्वाक्यं मोक्षमूलं गुरोः कृपा ॥

४.

**Dhyaanamoolam gurormoortim poojaamoolam guroh padam
Mantramoolam gurorvaakyam mokshamoolam guroh kripaa.**

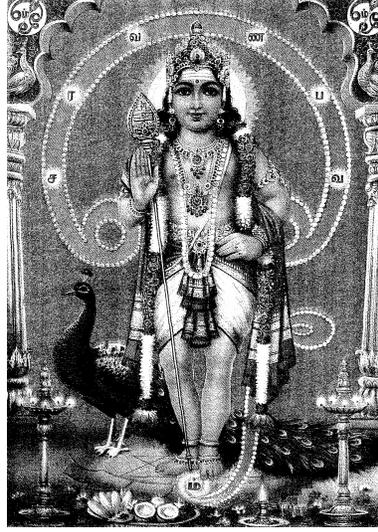
4.

Meaning:

The Guru is the form of knowledge, the feet of the Guru are the basis of worship, the words of the Guru are the basis of mantra and the mercy of the Guru is the basis of liberation.

LORD SUBRAHMANYA

Om Sri Saravanabhavaaya namaha.



मयूराधिरूढं महावाक्यगूढं मनोहारिदेहं महच्चित्तगेहम् ।
महीदेवदेवं महावेदभावं महादेवबालं भजे लोकपालम् ॥

Mayooraadhi-roodam mahaavaakya-goodam

Manohaari-deham mahachchitta-geham

Maheedeva-devam mahaaveda-bhaavam mahaadeva-baalam bhaje lokapalam

Meaning:

I salute the Lord who protects the whole universe, who is seated on a peacock, who is the essence of the great Mahaa vaakyaas, who is handsome, who is dwelling in the heart of great sages, who is worshipped by the Vedas, who is the quintessence of four Vedas (=Upanishads) and who is the son of Lord Shiva.



Lord Subrahmanya is the son of Shiva and Parvati and the younger brother of Ganesha.

When Subrahmanya was a very little boy he taught the meaning of "OM" (Pranava mantra) to his own father Lord Shiva whispering on his ears. Shiva accepted him as guru and listened to the exposition as a devoted disciple. Hence Subrahmanya is also called Swaminathan. This incident is depicted in a famous temple of his in Swamimalai where he is called Swaminatha, and the temple is one of the six hill temples of Lord Muruga (another name of Lord Subrahmanya) and all of them are located in the southern state Tamilnadu, in India.

LORD HANUMAN

Om Sri Hanumate namaha.



यत्र यत्र रघुनाथकीर्तनं तत्र तत्र कृतमस्तकांजलिम् ।
बाष्पवारि परिपूर्णं लोचनं मारुतिं नमत राक्षसांतकम् ॥

*Yatra yatra Raghunatha-keertanam tatra tatra kruta-mastakaanjalim
Baashpavaari-paripoorna-lochanam Maarutim namata raaksha-saantakam*

Meaning:

In all those nooks and corners, where the Lord of Raghunath (Rama) is sung about, in all such nooks and corners is he (Hanuman), in Anjali, with tears flooding from the eyes. Salutations to the son of Marut (Vayu=wind-god), who is the end of all evil ones.

LORD KUBERA

ॐ राजाधिराजाय प्रसह्यसाहिने । नमो वयं वैश्रवणाय कूर्महे ।
स मे कामान् कामकामाय मह्यम् । कामेश्वरो वैश्रवणो ददातु ।
कुबेराय वैश्रवणाय । महाराजाय नमः ॥

*Om Raajaadhiraajaaya prasahyasaahine namo vayam vaisravanaaya kurmahe
sa me kaamaan kaamakaamaaya mahyam kaameshvaro vaisravano dadaatu
kuberaaya vaisravanaaya maharaajaaya namaha.*

Meaning:

We offer salutations unto Vaisravana (the son of Visrava, i.e. Kubera), the king of kings, whose nature it is to help without any purpose of his own. May Vaisravana, the lord of deities, give me, the seeker of desires, what I desire. Salutations unto the great Lord Kubera, the son of Visrava.

Lord Kubera, the king of the Yakshas (a kind of demigods) is famous as the lord of wealth. He rules over the northern quarter of the universe.

The famous Kubera yantra is worshipped for prosperity.

The above mantra on Lord Kubera is also called the aarati mantra. It is chanted when aarati is shown for any God.

LORD SUDARSHANA

(Lord Vishnu's powerful chakra)



(Sri Sudarshana Yantra)

ॐ क्लीं कृष्णाय गोविन्दाय गोपी जनवल्लभाय पराय,
 परम पुरुषाय परमात्मने, परकर्म मंत्र यंत्र औषध,
 अस्त्र शस्त्राणि संहर, संहर, मृत्योर्मोचय मोचय
 ॐ नमो भगवते महा सुदर्शनाय दीप्ते ज्वाला परीताय
 सर्वदिक् शोभणकराय, हुं फट् ब्रह्मणे परं ज्योतिषे स्वाहा ॥

*Om Kleem Krishnaaya Govindaaya Gopee jana vallabhaaya
 Paraaya parama Purushaaya Paramaathmane
 Para Karma mantra Yantra owshadhastra
 Sastraani samhara samhara, mruthyor mochaya mochaya
 Om namo Bhagavate mahaa Sudarshanaaya
 Deepthre, jwaalaa pareethaaya sarvadik kshobana karaaya
 Humpatu brahmane Param jyothishe Swaahaa.*

Meaning:

O Lord Krishna, beloved of all devotees, O Supreme Soul of the Universe, O Universal Self, please save me from dangers of any form and remove the fear of death, O Supremely Effulgent Maha Sudarshana which shineth and protects us in all the eight directions, O Glorious Light, Salutations to thee !

The above mantra is chanted many times while performing the Sudarshana homam (havan). Prayers to Sri Sudarshanamurti and the famous Sudarshana Yantra is believed to alleviate serious diseases, avert great dangers, redeem lost wealth and prevent obstacles in any one's good efforts to succeed. It is very important that one should say this mantra without any error and with utmost purity of one's mind, body and soul.

LORD SURYA



आदित्यहृदयं पुण्यं सर्वशत्रु विनाशनम् । जयावहं जपेन्नित्यं अक्षयं परमं शिवम् ॥	१.
सर्वमंगल मांगल्यं सर्वपाप प्रणाशनम् । चिंता शोक प्रशमनं आयुर् वर्धनमुत्तमम् ॥	२.
नमः पूर्वाय गिरये पश्चिमायाऽद्रे नमः । ज्योतिः गणानां पतये दिनाधिपतये नमः ॥	३.

*Aadityahrudayam punyam sarva shatru vinaashanam
Jayaavaham japennityam akshayam paramam shivam.* 1.

*Sarvamangala maangalyam sarvapaapa pranaashanam
Chintaashoka prashamanam aayur varthanamuthamam.* 2.

*Namah poorvaaya giraye pashchimaayaatrave namaha
Jyotirganaanaam pataye dinaathipataye namaha.* 3.

Meaning:

1. The heart of Aditya (Lord Surya, the son of Aditi), which is highly virtuous, destroyer of all enemies, bestower of victory and is imperishable, should be repeatedly and constantly meditated upon.
2. The heart of Aditya is highly auspicious and will exterminate all sins; it will remove all worries and grief and will enhance the longevity of life and is excellent.
3. Salutations to Lord Surya, who is the mountain of the east and the mighty hill of the west, the lord of the hordes of light and the lord of the day.

The above slokas are taken from stotram called Aditya Hrudayam which is mentioned in Yuddha Kanda in Valmiki Ramayana. Sage Agastya described the glories of Lord Surya and advised Lord Rama to pray Lord Surya to win Ravana in battle and this constitutes the stotram 'Aditya Hrudayam'.

LORD CHANDESVARA



नीलकण्ठ पदाम्भोज परिस्फुरित मानस ।
शम्भोः सेवा बलं देहि चण्डेश्वर नमोस्तुते ॥

*Neelakanta padaambhoja parisphurita maanasa
Shamboh sevaabhalam dehi chandesvara namostute.*

Meaning:

Salutations to Lord Chandesvara, whose mind is always fixed at the feet of Param eshvara, grant the fruitfulness of me worshipping Lord Shiva.

Lord Chandesvara (also called Chandikesvara), a human devotee was raised to a status of a deity, by Lord Shiva because of his intense devotion. He is usually installed in every Shiva temple in the north-eastern corner, facing south. Devotees believe that he can act as a messenger and mediator interceding with Lord Shiva on behalf of the devotees. Hence supplication before him is a duty of every devotee visiting the Shiva temples.

GODDESS ANDAL



श्री विष्णु चित्त कुल नन्दन कल्पवल्लीं
श्रीरंगराज हरि चन्दन योग दृश्याम्
साक्षात् क्षमाम् कारुण्य कमलाशिवान्याम्
गोदाम् अनन्य शरणः शरणम् प्रपद्ये ॥

*Shree Vishnuchittha Kulanandana Kalpavalleem
Shree Rangaraaja Harichandana yoga drushyaam
Saakshaath Kshamaam Karunaya Kamalaamivaanyaam
Godhaam ananya Sharana: Sharanam Prapadhye.*

Meaning:

Godaa Piraatti (Andal/**Bhudevi**) is the wish-granting Kalpaka tree in flower garden of the kulam(family) of Sri Vishnu Chitthar; She is most beautiful as she gives us her darshan(appearance) as the Karpaka creeper united with her Lord Sri Rangarajan standing majestically as the Harichandana tree in that Nandavanam (garden); She is the incarnation of Bhoomi Devi (Mother Earth) known for her auspicious qualities of forbearance; indeed, Godai is the embodiment of forbearance; When it comes to the quality of Her Mercy, Godai is a veritable Mahaalakshmi (Kamalaa). I, who has no other refuge seek her as my sole refuge.

LIFE HISTORY OF ANDAL DEVI

A devout brahmin named Vishnuchittha lived in SriVilliputthur, a town near Madurai in South Indian state of TamilNadu. His daily duties included procuring flowers for the worship of the Lord at the local Lord Vishnu temple. One morning, as he went about his business, he discovered a baby girl lying under a tulasi plant in his flower garden. Having no family of his own, Vishnuchittha felt it was God's grace that gave him this child and named her Godai, or "gift of Mother Earth." Filled with joy, he took her home and raised her as his own. On Pooram (Poorva phalguni) Nakshatram (star) day of Tamil month Aadi (mid July-mid Aug.), we celebrate the birthday of Andal Devi.

Godai grew up in an atmosphere of love and devotion. Vishnuchittha doted on her in every respect, singing songs to her about his Beloved Krishna, teaching her all the stories and philosophy he knew, and sharing with her his love of Tamil poetry. The love Vishnuchittha had for his Beloved Lord intensified further in his daughter, and before long she was passionately in love with Lord Krishna. Even as a child, Godai made up her mind to marry none but the Lord of Brindavana, and refused to think of any human being in similar terms. She imagined what it would be like to be His bride, playing the role of His beloved, enjoying His presence. Unknown to her father, she adorned herself daily with the flower garland he prepared for the Lord at the temple. After admiring her reflection and thinking of herself as His ideal bride, she would put the garland back for her father to take to the temple and offer to the Lord.

One day, Vishnuchittha noticed a strand of Godai's hair on one of the garlands. Shocked and saddened by this desecration of what was meant only for the Lord, he scolded Godai for her misuse of the garland and discarded it. He carefully prepared a new one and offered it to the Lord, begging His pardon all the while.

That night, the Lord appeared to Vishnuchittha in his dream and asked him why he discarded Godai's garland instead of offering it to Him. He told Vishnuchittha that He missed the scent of Godai's body in the flowers and that He preferred them that way and asked would he please continue to give the garlands once worn by Godai? Overcome with emotion, Vishnuchittha awoke and cried tears of both joy and remorse. It dawned on him that his daughter was someone whose love of God was so intense and pure that even he had not comprehended its extent. Her spiritual greatness was such that the Lord Himself wished to share her presence. From that day on, she became known as "Andal", the girl who "ruled" over the Lord and as "Sudikkoduttha Sudarkodi", the lady who offered garlands to God after wearing them first.

Andal blossomed into a beautiful young woman as she came of marriageable age. When

asked to marry, however, she stubbornly refused, saying that she would only agree to marry her Lord. Vishnuchittha despaired, wondering what was to become of his daughter. One night, Lord Ranganatha, the Lord Narayana laying on his serpent bed, at the great temple town of Srirangam near Tiruchirappalli in TamilNadu, appeared in his dream and asked that Andal be sent to Him in all her wedding finery. Simultaneously, the Lord appeared before the priests at Srirangam and asked them to prepare for the coming of Andal. Vishnuchittha once again was filled with both joy and sadness; joy that his beloved daughter would attain her goal, but sadness at losing her at the same time. He arranged for Andal's journey in a palanquin to Srirangam in full bridal glory.

Andal waited with excited anticipation as the wedding party approached Lord Ranganatha's shrine. As they entered the temple, she jumped out of the palanquin, unable to restrain herself any longer. Running into the temple sanctum, she embraced Lord Ranganatha and disappeared in a blaze of glory, having joined her Lord. She was only fifteen at the time. Andal's union with the Lord is celebrated as Koodaaravalli in the tamil month Margazhi (Danurmasam-mid Dec.-mid Jan.). We offer sweet pongal to Sri Andal and Lord Vishnu and share the Prasad with all other devotees. At Vishnuchitthar's request, the Lord agreed to a traditional marriage ceremony which was performed at Srivilliputthur on the Uthiram (Uthira phalguni) nakshatram (star) day of tamil month Panguni (Meena Phalguna-mid March-mid April) and is even now celebrated in all Vishnu temples on the same day every year.

Andal is one of the twelve alvars and best loved poet-saints of the Tamils. Pious tradition reckons her to be the veritable descent of Bhoomi Devi (Mother Earth) in bodily form to show humanity the way to His lotus feet.

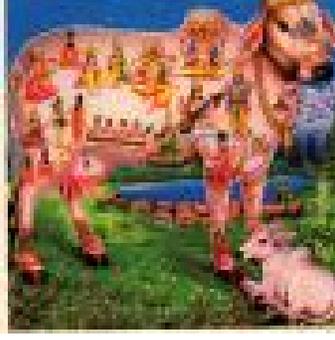
Andal as Bhudevi is present in all Vishnu temples, in India and elsewhere, next to her Lord, as she always desired.

Today, the tulasi garden in which she was found is preserved in Srivilliputthur. Vishnuchittha's house, adjacent to Lord Vishnu's temple, has been converted into a temple in honor of Andal and contains the well in which she admired her reflection while wearing the Lord's garlands.

Most of all, however, Andal is remembered for her poetry, in which she often strikes autobiographical notes about her love for her Lord. She describes herself as a young girl, still not fully mature, pining away for Him. She beseeches her friends, the god of love, and even animals for help in her quest to attain Him. Finally, she describes her good fortune of being the daughter of Vishnuchittha (who later came to be known as Perialwar), the best of the devout, who lives in Srivilliputthur and adores the Lord. Her famous work is the Tiruppaavai, a tamil poem of thirty verses in which Andal imagines herself to be a cowherd girl during the incarnation of Lord Krishna. She yearns to serve Him and achieve happiness not just in this birth, but for all eternity, and describes the religious vow (*paavai*) that she and her fellow cowgirls will take for this purpose. Devotees chant one verse of Tiruppaavai everyday, from those 30 verses in order, during Danurmasam (mid Dec.-mid Jan.).

.....

COW



सर्वकामदुघे देवि सर्वतीर्थाभिषेचिनी ।
पावने सुरभिश्चेष्टे देवि तुभ्यं नमोस्तु ते ॥

*Sarvakaamadughe devi sarva-teerthaa-bhishechinee
Paavane surabhishestte devi tubhyam namostute.*

Meaning:

The goddess (cow) who grants us all our wishes, who gives us all the benefits as of bathing in all holy waters, who makes us pure by removing all our sins, the supreme Kamadhenu (divine cow), my salutations to you.

Cow is considered sacred; it is believed that all the gods and goddesses are within the cow so worshipping the cow is like worshipping all the gods and goddesses and the picture above represents the same.

BILVA



त्रिदलं त्रिगुणाकारं त्रिनेत्रं च त्रियायुतम् ।
त्रिजन्मपापसंहारं एकं बिल्वं शिवार्पणम् ॥

*Tridalam trigunaakaaram trinetram cha triyaayutam
Trijanma paapasamhaaram eka bilvam shivaarpanam*

Meaning:

Offer the trifoliolate Bilva leaf which destroys the sins of three births, to Lord Shiva, the three-eyed Lord having the trident in His hand.

It is considered very auspicious to worship Lord Shiva (Linga) with Bilva leaves; we can see Bilva tree in many Shiva temples.

TULASI

यन्मूले सर्व तीर्थानि यन्मध्ये सर्व देवताः ।
यदग्रे सर्व वेदाश्च तुलसीं त्वां नमाम्यहं ॥

*Yanmoole Sarvateerthaani yanmadhye sarvadevataaha
Yadagre sarva vedaascha tulaseem-tvaam namaamyaham.*

Meaning:

I bow down to the Tulasi at whose base are all the holy places, on whose middle reside all deities and at whose top are all the Vedas.

Sri Tulasi - the goddess is the beloved of Lord Vishnu; One time Krishna's wife Satyabhama tried to balance the scale with Lord Krishna himself on one plate and all the wealth including jewels on another; she could not balance it and Krishna was weighing heavier than the wealth. Seeing this, Rukmini, the Krishna's wife placed a tulasi leaf instead of jewels when Krishna weighed equal to the Tulasi leaf. Such was the greatness of Tulasi. We can see Tulasi plants in almost all Vishnu temples. Many people have Tulasi plants at their homes too and worship her. Sri Tulasi is the remover of sins and giver of virtues.

ASHWATHA TREE



मूलतो ब्रह्मरूपाय मध्यतो विष्णुरूपिणे ।
अग्रतः शिवरूपाय वृक्षराजाय ते नमः ॥

*Moolato brahmaroopaaya madhyato vishnuroopine
Agratah shivaroopaaya vriksharaajaaya te namaha.*

Meaning:

Salutations to Vriksharaja (the king of trees), who takes the form of Brahma at the base (roots), Vishnu in the middle (bark) and Shiva at the top (branches).

The Ashwatha tree also known as Pipal tree or Banyan tree or Bodhi tree is regarded as the most holy tree since it is believed that its base stands for Brahma, trunk for Vishnu and the top for Shiva and each and every leaf for all devas.

This Ashwatha tree is quite remarkable because it grows both upwards as well as from top to bottom. The branches themselves morph into roots, so even if the original tree decays and perishes its branches underneath are young and continue to enclose the parent. It is said to be eternal.

NIGHT PRAYER



करचरणकृतं वाक्-कायजं कर्मजं वा श्रवणनयनजं वा मानसं वाऽपराधम् ।
विहितमविहितं वा सर्वमेतत् क्षमस्व जय जय करुणाब्धे श्रीमहादेव शम्भो ॥

*Kara-charana-krutam vaak-kaayajam karmajam vaa
Shravana-nayana-jam vaa maanasam vaa aparaadham
Vihitam-avihitam vaa sarvametad kshamasva
Jaya jaya karunaabdhe shree mahaadeva shambho.*

Meaning:

Lord, kindly forgive all the omissions and commissions born of my eyes, ears, mind, and organ of speech, or done by my hands and feet, and the omissions and commissions in the performance of my duties, either enjoined or prohibited. Glory to you, the Great Lord Shiva, who is the ocean of kindness and the cause of happiness.

Before going to sleep, one ends the day with this prayer. One asks the lord for forgiveness for inappropriate actions that one may have knowingly or unknowingly done during the day. These actions may be physical, verbal, or mental. Prayer itself is an action that has its own result in the form of punya, which neutralizes the paapas (sins) born of errors of omission and commission. Prayer is an appreciation of one's limitations, and a request for the blessings of the Lord for inner maturity and strength.

PEACE



ॐ शन्नो मित्रः शं वरुणः । शन्नो भवत्वयमा । शन्न इन्द्रो बृहस्पतिः ।
 शन्नो विष्णुरुक्रमः । नमो ब्रह्मणे । नमस्ते वायो ।
 त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मासि । त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मं वदिष्यामि ।
 ऋतं वदिष्यामि । सत्यं वदिष्यामि । तन्मामवतु । तद्वक्तारमवतु ।
 अवतु माम् । अवतु वक्तारम् ॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*Om shanno mitrah sham varunaha / shanno bhavatvayamaa / sanna indro
 bruhaspatihi*

*Shanno vishnururukramaha / namo brahmane / namaste vaayo
 Tvameva pratyaksham brahmaasi / tvameva pratyaksham brahma vadishyaami
 Rutam vadishyaami satyam vadishyaami / tanmaamavatu tadvaktaaramavatu
 Avatu maam avatu vaktaaram / om shaantih shaantih shaantihi.*

Meaning:

May the Sun God (Mitra) give us auspiciousness. May the ocean God (Varuna) give us auspiciousness. May the Lord of Manes (Aryama) give us auspiciousness. May the king of Gods (Indra) and the preceptor of Gods (Brihaspati) give us

auspiciousness. May the all pervasive sustainer of creation, Lord Vamana (Urukrama) give us auspiciousness. Salutations to the creator (Brahma). Salutations to you, O Wind God (Vayu). You indeed are the perceptible truth. I understand you to be the perceptible truth. I declare you to be the right understanding. I understand you to be truthfulness in speech. May he protect me. May he protect the teacher. May he protect me. May he protect the teacher. Om peace, peace, peace.

This is the opening verse of the Taittireeya Upanishad, from the Krishna Yajur Veda. The subject matter of the Upanishads is Brahma-vidya, knowledge of the self. Self-knowledge reveals the essential nature of the self as being non-separate from the Lord.

A seeker seeks blessings of various devatas for gaining this knowledge. The study of the Upanishads is not undertaken without the help of a teacher who can unfold Brahma-vidya. In this prayer, one seeks protection for oneself and the teacher so that there may be no hindrance in the fulfillment of this pursuit. This prayer may be recited by the student before undertaking any study.

