

NAMADWAAR SINGAPORE

Newsletter Issue #2



SRI RAMA: A TIMELESS EMBLEM OF DIVINITY



SCIENCE & SCRIPTURES - CONCEPT OF TIME



STORIES, CULTURE AND HINDU TEMPLES
OF SOUTHEAST ASIA



TULSI- THE SACRED PLANT

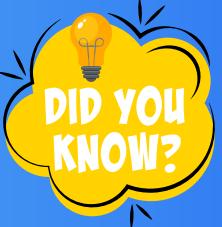
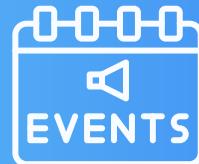


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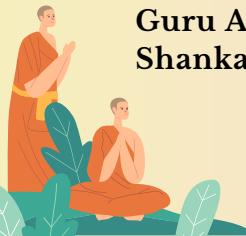
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Editorial Note

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter, where each page is woven with threads of cultural richness and spiritual enlightenment. In this issue, we proudly present an in-depth exploration of Namadwaar Singapore and its enriching array of activities and classes. From spiritual workshops to community events, Namadwaar Singapore continues to be a beacon of cultural and spiritual learning.

This newsletter chronicles the vibrant tapestry of events that have graced Namadwaar Singapore over the past quarter, offering a glimpse into our community's celebrations, gatherings, and workshops. The very first article is tied to Rama Navami Celebrations where we will delve into the Kalyana Gunas of Lord Rama, inviting deeper reflection and understanding. Our "Learn with Us" segment beckons you into the world of simple slokas with profound meanings, beginning with an introduction to Sri Guru Panchakam composed by HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamigal. These verses hold a special resonance as we approach Guru Poornima this month, honouring the guiding light of our spiritual mentors. Be sure to join us in embracing the wisdom encapsulated in the words of our Guru, in the article titled "Soulful Reflections of the Guru" featuring translations of Sri Swamiji's enlightening discourses from past Madhuramurali editions. This edition will explore the essence of a true sadhu and unveil the profound teachings embedded in Sri Adi Shankaracharya's Guru Ashtakam, illuminating our path with timeless wisdom.

In our June month segment, experience the cultural mosaic of Namadwaar Singapore through the premiere of the Tulsi Puja event. Be sure to read up on the article titled "Tulsi – The Sacred Plant" which highlights the sacred and medicinal significance behind the Tulsi plant. Furthermore, journey with us as we explore the fascinating intersection of ancient wisdom and modern scientific perspectives as we look into the very interesting article which will be discussing the concept of Time, breaking down complex themes and defining them both with spiritual and scientific evidence.

For our young readers, discover "Whispers of Divinity: Unveiling Srimad Bhagavatham's Tales," where enchanting stories from Srimad Bhagavatham Purana unfold with pragmatic values that resonate across generations. Dive into Singapore's rich cultural tapestry with our local treasures, showcasing the harmonizing role of storytelling and culinary traditions in our multicultural society. Adding a touch of local flavor, we will be presenting two articles, signifying how social activities like storytelling and food, both strongly influenced by culture, play a vital role in harmonizing people in a multicultural society. The article titled "Stories, Culture and Hindu Temples in South East Asia" discusses how stories from Indian scriptures have penetrated Southeast Asian countries. Since temples stand as living proof of rich cultural heritage passed down through generations, the article intends to dive deeper into showcasing temples in Singapore in subsequent issues. The article titled "Singapore – The Food Paradise", draws parallels in the culinary delights across diverse cuisines in Singapore, signifying that food and spices harmonize the values of a diverse society.

From the stories woven through Southeast Asian temples to the culinary delights that unite us, each article reflects the values and diversity that define us.

As you explore these pages readers, keep an eye out for our "Did You Know" bubbles, offering glimpses into current events that echo the core values explored throughout our newsletter. We invite you to savour and immerse yourselves in this edition, where wisdom meets cultural heritage, and together, we celebrate unity in diversity.

Warm regards,

Your Newsletter Editorial Team

Shreya Sridharan, Praveen Raman, Sanjana Raghuraman, Vishveshwaran Sridharan

NAMADWAAR

Singapore



About us

Namadwaar Singapore is a registered Hindu society inspired by HH Maharanyan Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamigal established since Nov 8, 2012 to help promote Universal Love for the betterment of human race without any social , cultural or geographical barriers. Namadwaar literally means, 'The Portal of the Divine Name'. It shows a path to the Supreme truth through Nama Sankirtan, specifically the Mahamantra.

The Mahamantra

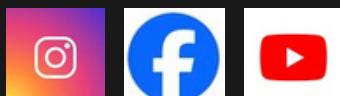
"Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare"



Keep in Touch

To know more about us and what we do, visit our website: <https://namadwaarsg.org/>

Follow us on our Social Media Platforms for regular updates





APRIL

2024



Monthly

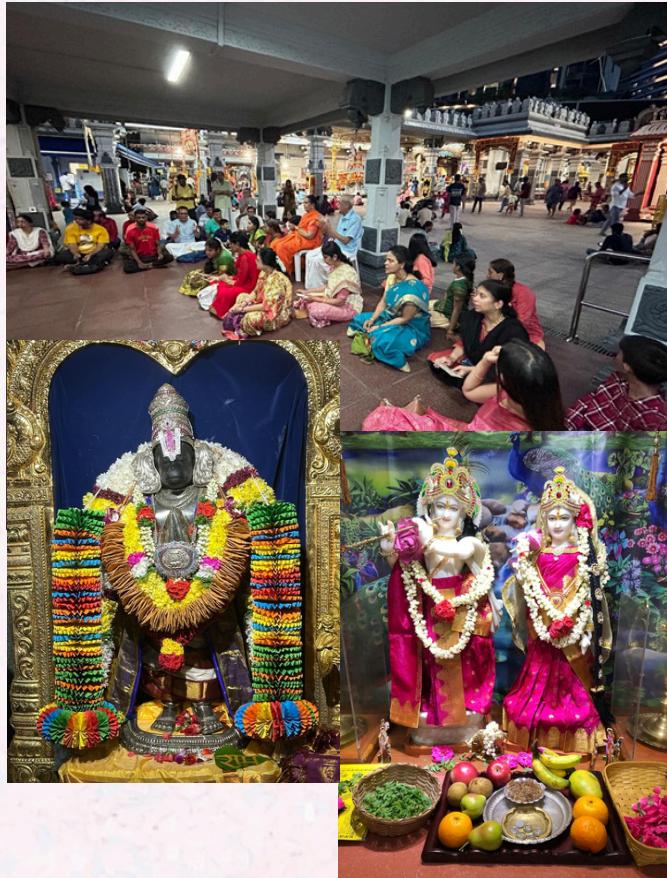


April 14

For Tamil New Year, Rama Nama Lekhana garland (garland made out of colourful papers with Rama nama written on it) was offered to Anjaneyar at Sri Perumal temple. Many devotees of Namadwaar, GopaKuteeram parents and children had written Rama nama on these colourful papers and they were put together as 2 beautiful garlands for the deities with the help of GopaKuteeram parents.

Many Gopakuteeram parents and children along with devotees of Namadwaar gathered at the temple, chanted for an hour and this garland and vadai Malai were offered.

Following this, we had a special mass prayer at Namadwaar. The day ended with blissful nama chanting and Dolotsavam.



April 17-25



Sri Rama Navami Utsav was celebrated at Namadwaar from 17th -25th April with Srimad Ramayana Parayan for 9 days. On the first day, garland for Sri Premikavaradhan & Sri Madhurisakhi was made out of 'Rama nama lekhana' - written by devotees of Namadwaar and GopaKuteeram parents. The Navaham ended with Rama Pattabisheka parayan and celebrations.

April 29

2nd Yuva talk series at Namadwaar Singapore by GopaKuteeram students on Dhruva charitra. The 3 speakers: Miss Yashvi, Master Bharat & Miss Manasvini beautifully told the story and also chanted the entire Dhruva Stuthi in front of devotees of Namadwaar with Dr. Janani Vasudevanji as our special guest.



Sri Rama: A Timeless Emblem of Divinity

Written by: Master Praveen Raman



Srimad Ramayana is a timeless epic that continues to offer profound wisdom and guidance for modern seekers. In its 24,000 shlokas, it acutely captures the essence of an ideal society, showcasing Dasharatha as the ideal father, Sugreeva as the ideal friend, Sita as the ideal wife, Hanuman as the ideal devotee, and even Ravana as the ideal enemy. At the center of this narrative is Sri Rama, the epitome of the ideal qualities of a hero, and a living example of how divinity and humanity are inseparable.

Sri Rama therefore has been the object of reverence and inspiration for devotees and seekers for centuries, so that they themselves may realize their latent divine potential. However, the stark contrast between the ideal world portrayed in Srimad Ramayana and the conflict-ridden modern world, naturally raises a question about the practicality of realizing such ideals today, and even if one were to be open to it, how? This essay makes a humble attempt to reconcile this tension by proposing three actionable pillars: abidance by truth, self-mastery, and selfless service, inspired by Sri Rama's life.

Pillar 1: Abidance by Truth

The first pillar that sets the foundation for the Divine to prosper is the loyal abidance to truth. India's popular national motto, सत्यमेव जयते [truth alone triumphs], underscores the paramount importance of truth in our scriptures.

truth is one of the highest virtues to develop, for it is not only a quality of Divinity, but also a prerequisite for attaining it. Sri Rama is described by Sage Valmiki as being endowed with the quality of सत्यवाक्यः [truth-speaking]. Not only did he refrain from uttering lies, but he also consistently made choices that upheld truth, regardless of the consequences. When faced with the opportunity to ascend the throne of Ayodhya, he chose instead to honor his father's promise to Queen Kaikeyi, leading to his exile for 14 years. Absolute power corrupts absolutely, but for Sri Rama, the guiding light of truth dispelled any such darkness of corruption, and he made the choice that would ultimately uphold the value of the king's words, which in turn ensured the stability of the kingdom. Thankfully, most of us would never have to face such an extreme scenario in our lives, but we can still find multitude of opportunities in our daily lives to uphold truth. Whether it's refraining from telling convenient white lies or standing up against falsehoods in society, these choices shape our character and contribute to a more truthful world. As shown by Sri Rama, embracing truth not only illuminates the path towards righteousness, but also nurtures divinity within us and in the world around us.

Pillar 2: Self-Mastery

The second pillar demands one to continually strive for self-mastery, recognizing that Divine is limitless, and to embody Divinity, one must strive to perfect their human nature. Self-mastery demands introspection and a sincere commitment to perfecting all aspects of our being. This constant endeavor towards conquering oneself encapsulates the very essence of the human spirit, its relentless pursuit of progress and growth. Sri Rama consistently embodied this self-mastery in every domain of life, whether it was mastery over his senses (आत्मवान् [self-controlled], जितक्रोधः [conquered anger], अनसूयकः [free of envy]), perfection of his physical (प्रियदर्शनः [graceful and pleasant disposition], वीर्यवान् [valorous], देवाः बिभ्यति [whom even the devas fear]) and mental faculties (प्रवद्धान् [learned], धर्मज्ञः [being righteous], द्यूतिमान् [effulgent]), and expertise in which he executed his duties (समर्थः [capable], चारित्रेण युक्तः [good conduct]). Most importantly, Sri Rama embodied these qualities with the consciousness of an ordinary human being, and not as an avatar of the omnipotent God with superhuman abilities. This serves as a reminder of limitless potential of every individual, provided they reject false, self-imposed limitations and strive for perfection. Hence, it is pertinent that we remind ourselves and those around us to constantly strive to expand our boundaries of limitations so that we may one day transcend all limits and attain the limitless Divinity, perfection personified.

Pillar 3: Selfless Service

The third, and final pillar, urges us to expand our “self” through the virtue of “selfless service”, the platform on which Divinity blossoms. The Divine is concerned with universal well-being, not individual benefit at the expense of others. Therefore necessarily, one centered in the Divine would consider the Universe as the Self, and the Self as the Universe. Consequently, their actions would be aligned with the highest good for existence. Operating with such a lofty ideal, one naturally becomes a servant of servitors, transcending pettiness, and narrow-mindedness towards a wide, all-encompassing compassionate disposition. In my opinion, among all of Sri Rama’s 16 Divine qualities, this quality, सर्वभूतेषु हितः [disposed towards the welfare of all beings], in itself could qualify him to be Divinity embodied. Indeed, we see episode after episode in Srimad Ramayana where the undercurrent of selflessness is predominantly displayed. Even at the end, after saving his beloved wife Sita from Ravana, Sri Rama as a king, had to address the rumor and growing distrust in Sita among his subjects. He made the difficult decision to send her off to an ashram, thus setting a strict adherence to Dharma for his subjects to follow. Sita, being Sri Rama’s other half, and embodying his righteousness, willingly accepted this decision for the greater good of society, even though it meant personal suffering. Of course, this does not mean that one needs to suffer to do good for others, our experience itself being a proof. When we help those in need with the selfless spirit, it often invokes a sense of humility and gratitude. With this inner state as a guide stick to gauge our actions, we may then strive for what is right and good for the society, country, and the world. In the sweetness of selfless service, the Divinity within us feels most at home and at peace.

Conclusion

Sri Rama as an icon of human perfection has been revered for centuries and continues to gain relevance among seekers. This piece introduces three pillars; truth, self-mastery, and selfless service that facilitates one’s journey from humanity to the Divine in today’s world. While presented as distinct, the three pillars are closely interdependent and intertwined in practical reality. Progress in one pillar, often strengthens the others. For instance, commitment to truthfulness in speech can lead to greater self-control and a more effective role in upholding Dharma and serving society. This complementary nature creates a self-reinforcing cycle of virtue, offering encouragement and sense of certainty as one travels the path towards the Divine. Jai Sri Ram.





The image features a purple background with a large, stylized white text "LEARN WITH US". The letters have a red wavy pattern running through them. Below the main title, there are two lines of text in a pink font: "by: Brahmasri Raviteja Janardhanan" and "ed by: Miss Shreya Sridharan". To the right of the text, there is a red silhouette of a person with arms outstretched, holding two books and a globe. The background has a light blue gradient at the bottom.

A Guru is important for anyone in life. If you notice, everyone requires or seeks a teacher or trainer to acquire knowledge or learn new skills. For instance, when we want to learn to swim, the first thought is to seek a trainer rather than think of teaching ourselves even when we have faculties to swim. Why is that inherent to us? It is because we worry that something wrong might happen or that we may land ourselves in unfortunate situations that may pose a risk to our lives when we venture into something new without proper guidance. This is the same for all situations.

When we want to achieve a new skill or hone a talent, let's say learning how to ride a bike or learning to dance, despite having the right tools under our disposal, we seek assistance from a more experienced person or a professional. If this is the case for learning new skills that can be seen, imagine how important is it to have guidance when we seek to develop and excel in spirituality, that can neither be seen by our naked eye nor perceived by any of our senses.

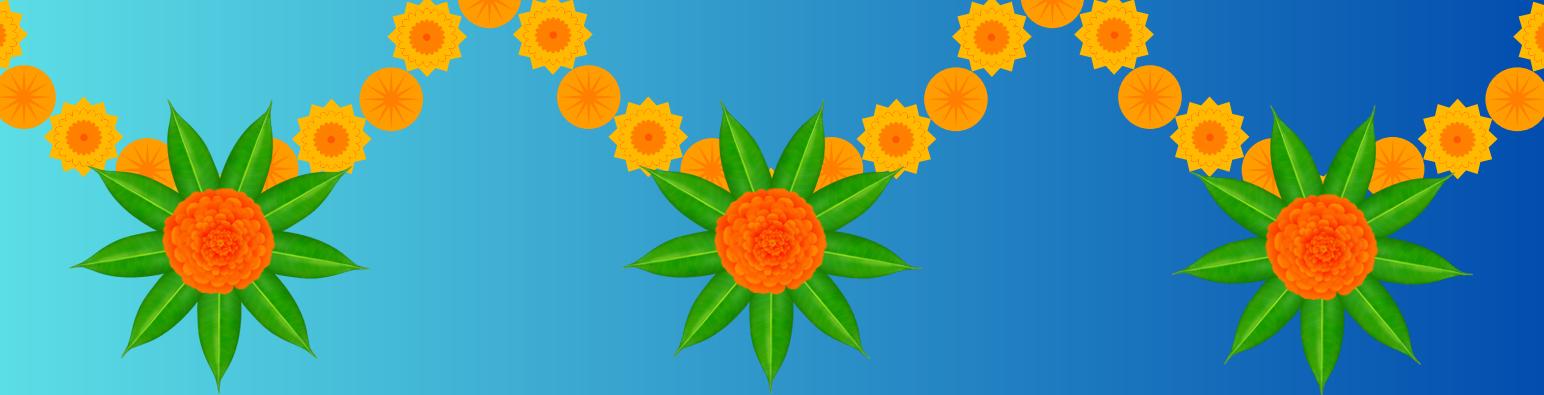
A skeptic might say that something invisible is not real. However, this argument is baseless because in certain instances, even if something is not visible to our eyes, we can perceive it/draw an inference through our mind. Let us look at a small example: There is a mountain and there is a burning fire behind the mountain. Even if the mountain blocks the fire, the smoke emerging from behind the mountain enables us to deduce the invisible raging fire behind the mountain. Why? In our mind, we start to infer and come to a logical conclusion that without fire there will be no smoke. So if smoke is seen, that means there is a

fire there. For this inference skill to work, it needs to have been presented to us very clearly. Only if we had seen a fire, and smoke coming out of the fire, would we be able to infer that where there is smoke, there is fire. Now, anytime we see smoke, we immediately infer that there is a raging fire at the location from where we see the smoke emerging.

Though inference skills help in many situations, we cannot rely on the skill set to excel and grow spiritually, because we have neither seen God before nor seen the path that can be taken to reach God. Then what do we do? How do we get to know about this? If we can't see God with our eyes, nor can we infer to reach him, there is a third way that makes this feat possible- 'Shabdha' - shastram. This indicates to us that to know and grow spiritually, the only way is through shastras. That is why, in our Sanatana Dharma, one name for Bhagavan/God is Shastraika Vedyan and the one who shows us this is The Guru.

Stay tuned with us for the upcoming editions of the newsletter where we will be traversing through HH Maharnayam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji's Guru Panchakam, looking deeply into its meaning while also understanding and in turn relishing in the importance of a Guru - Guru Mahima

To be Continued....



M A Y

2024



Monthly

EVENTS

April 27 -
May 5



Dr Jananiji's visit to Singapore was full of interesting talks, satsangs, fun filled outings and programmes for both youngsters and adults. With soul melting topics from Leelanubhavam and an introduction to the Bala Kanda of Ramacharitmanas, her talks tugged the hearstrings of all. Dr Jananiji also conducted 2 programmes for GopaKuteeram Children on the topics of FOMO to JOMO and building bridges. Her satsangs ended with a grand Sita Kalayanam at Namadwaar Singapore!



April 27-28
& May 4

Madhurageetham Music contest was held at Namadwaar and SIFAS for different categories. The entire event was a huge success which was well received with more than 175 participants, supported by enthusiastic parents, teachers and audience! At SIFAS, we had a mini concert by young children, who sang Madhurageethams under the "budding stars" category, stealing the hearts of everyone!



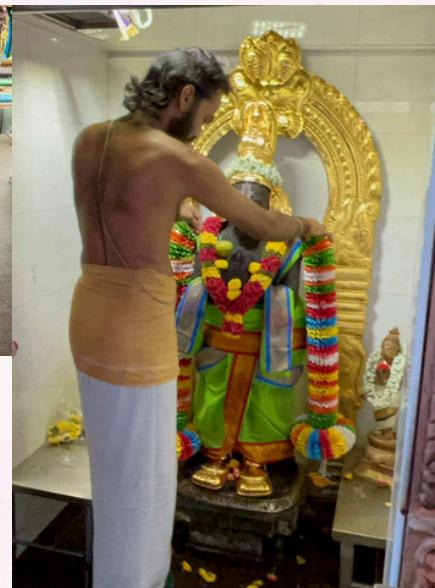
Monthly



May 7



Mahamantra chanting and offering of Rama Nama lekhana garland to Anjaneyar at Vadapathira Kali amman temple



May 22

Sri Narasimha Jayanthi celebrations at Namadwaar on 22 May led by Jana ji – celebrations included parayanam and storyline of Prahladha charitram, Lagu stothram, song and namavali.

Namadwaar Singapore
Narasimha Jayanti
Satsangh



May 26

Vasanthotsav celebration at Namadwaar led by Jana ji - celebrations included singing Madhurageethams, Namavalis, followed by mass prayer and dolotsavam.





SOULFUL REFLECTIONS OF THE GURU

Translated by: Miss Shreya Sridharan

Adapted from: Sri Swamiji's Sambhashanaigal - Madhuramurali Nov'98 issue

(All deficiencies in the interpretation and translation are that of the author)

At its core, the underlying theme of Sanatana Dharma revolves around the concepts of eternal truth (Sanatana) and the inherent order or righteousness (dharma) that governs the universe. As this way of life encompasses the pursuit of truth, the practice of righteous living, and the realization of one's spiritual potential, Sadhus, through their wisdom and teachings, play a pivotal role in nurturing and perpetuating these ideals. Then a question arises. Who is a sadhu? What are the characteristics and qualities often associated with true sadhus? Sri Swamiji in his Sambashanai has touched upon this topic. This section attempts to understand and translate the nectarine words of Sri Swamiji.

Sri Swamiji says that whoever remains in a state of eternal truthfulness at all times is considered a Sadhu. True Sadhus continuously engage in chanting, praying, worshiping, and undertaking pilgrimages. They always remain calm and compassionate. A true Sadhu never wastes a moment.

In this world, to earn livelihood, people engage in physical labor, toiling in scorching heat laying roads, constructing multi-storey buildings. With the earnings, they support their children and families. Some people don't undertake physical labor, but expend intellectual efforts to earn their livelihoods by curing and healing diseases of others (Eq: doctors), and coming up with scientific solutions (Eq. engineers and scientists) in providing succor. No one remains idle.

A worldly person, before consuming food, should contemplate on whether it was earned through legitimate means (through physical or intellectual pursuit), and without harming others. They should also ponder if they have taken care of their family members and discharged their familial duties. Similarly, Sadhus should introspect if they are worthy of consuming the food offered to them on charity by worldly people. Only Sadhus who spend a good portion of their time by chanting or meditating, become eligible to consume the food that they receive on charity. To qualify as a true Sadhu, one should continuously perform Bhakti by contemplating on God (Brahma vicharam) or Chanting God's names (Nama sankirtan).

Just like how it is futile to look for a solution to our problem from a person who cannot solve his own problem, and just like how a person who lacks courage doesn't have the necessary capability to provide courage to a person who needs it, a person without Bhakti will

not be able to propagate Bhakti. Even if they do so, it will not be beneficial to anyone. Worldly people should be careful about whom they confide in discussing their problems. They should share their situation ONLY to Sadhus and God. If their problems are beyond the comprehension of Sadhus, they should confide in God as prayers to God never go a waste. Instead, if worldly people share their problems with anyone who enquires about their wellbeing, it is an utter waste of time. Doing so will only result in the person's problem spreading, as gossip, creating further unhappiness to the person.

While true Sadhus remain calm and compassionate, Sri Swamiji clarifies that even anger, as a trait, has its place. If expressed in the right situation, it becomes a virtue. In Srimad Ramayana, Valmiki describes Sri Rama's qualities and describes that Sri Rama's anger was like the fire of destruction. Recognizing injustice and getting angry at the right time is a virtue for a king like Sri Rama. Anger is perfectly justified in situations where justice needs to be established and perpetrators need to be taught a lesson. A few might think that standing against unjust behavior can harbor resentment from others. But, recognizing injustice and standing up against it, is virtuous even if it sometimes leads to conflicts.

Hence, being good (sathwik) does not mean being indifferent to the issues of the world due to laziness; being tolerant is different from being cowardly. Didn't Mahatmas like Sri Adi Shankaracharya condemn the philosophies and practices that were faulty? Did they not point out the aberrations? Haven't several Mahatmas still accepted Sri Adi Shankaracharya as Jagadguru (Universal Guru)?

Debating and deliberating over different doctrines has been regarded as a healthy practice in our dharma. Whereas, to attack or criticize one based on their lineage or lifestyle has been considered as an uncivilized behavior. Mahatmas never indulge in personal attack on an individual. They have only expressed their disagreements with regards to philosophies.

Sri Adi Shankaracharya's Guru Ashtakam

Written by: Miss Shreya Sridharan

The great Saint Sri Adishankaracharya, who renounced worldly pleasures at a young age, established the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta. He wrote influential commentaries on key Hindu texts and established mutts across India. One of his popular works is the revered Sri Guru Ashtakam.

Did You Know

Sri Adi Shankaracharya was adept in Sankrit & vedas at a very young age and he even took sanyas when he was only 8 years old.

This Profound hymn highlights the crucial role of a Guru in one's spiritual journey. The repetition of "Tatah Kim" in each verse serves to emphasize the importance of keeping our thoughts and minds focused on the Guru.

Regardless of one's status, devotion to the Guru is essential for true fulfillment. Let us take a look at the meaning of all 8 verses!

Verse
1

Even with the finest clothing, companionship, reputation, and wealth, if one's mind is not centered upon the lotus feet of the Guru, all these blessings hold no true value.

Verse
2

Even after being blessed with a good family, home, and kindred, if one's mind is not centered upon the lotus feet of the Guru, all these blessings hold no true value.

Verse
3

Even after mastering the Vedas, acquiring the knowledge of all sciences, and possessing prowess in prose and poetry, if one's mind is not centered upon the lotus feet of the Guru, all these accomplishments hold no true value.



Even after being honored in other lands, prosperous in one's homeland, and following the paths of righteous conduct, if one's mind is not centered upon the lotus feet of the Guru, all these achievements hold no true value.

Even after being constantly extolled and honored by hosts of emperors and rulers, if one's mind is not centered upon the lotus feet of the Guru, all this praise holds no true value.

5

After traveling in all directions through philanthropy and prowess, and acquiring all the things of this world as rewards for one's virtues, if one's mind is not centered upon the lotus feet of the Guru, all these rewards hold no true value.

6

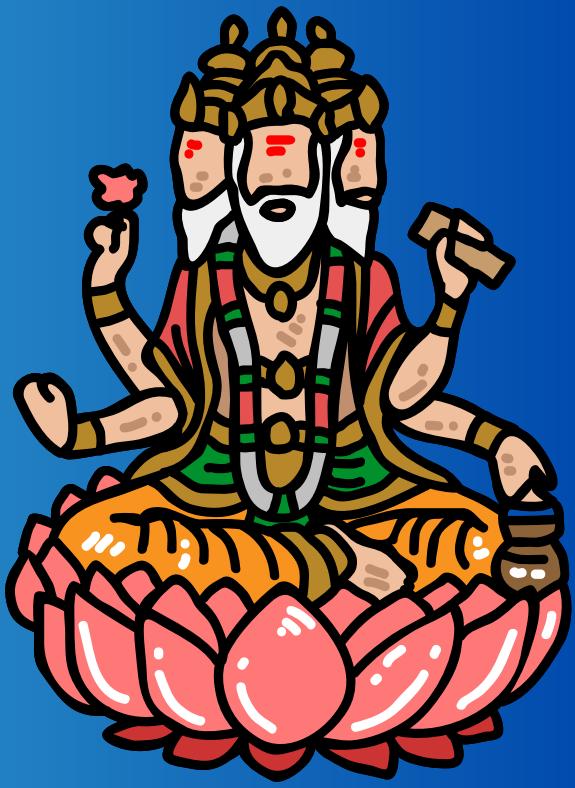
Even after being dispassionate toward worldly enjoyment, yogic powers, the face of the beloved, and riches, if one's mind is not centered upon the lotus feet of the Guru, all this detachment holds no true value.

7

Even if one's mind does not dwell upon the forest, the home, one's goals, the body, or what is auspicious, if it is not centered upon the lotus feet of the Guru, all this detachment holds no true value.

8

JUNE 2024



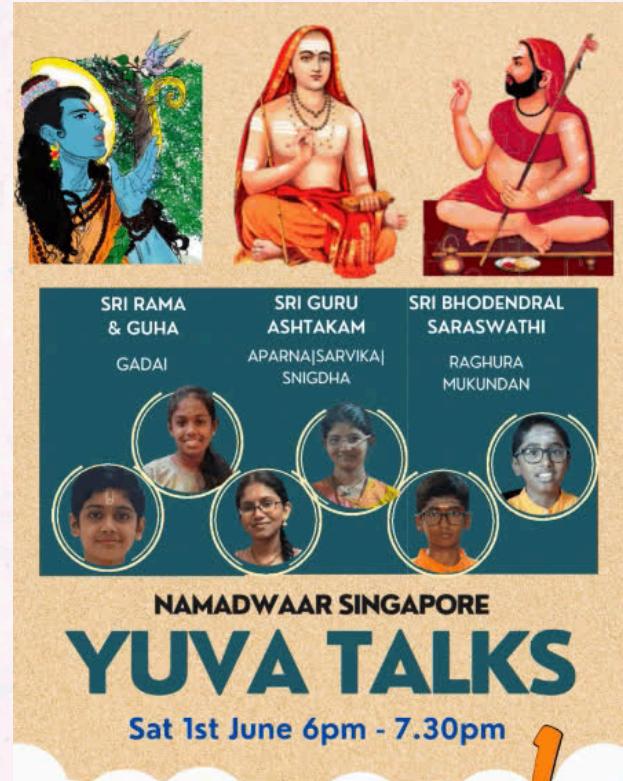
Monthly

EVENTS

June 1

To honour the multiple Jayanthis of Acharyas in the month of May: Sri Vallabacharya Jayanthi, Sri Shankaracharya Jayanthi, Sri Surdas Jayanthi, Sri Ramanujacharya Jayanthi, Sri Narasimha Jayanthi, Sri Narada Jayanthi to name a few, the 3rd Yuva Talks program was held on 1 June. The youth payed tribute to these Acharyas and Bhaktas, who have shown us the path of bhakthi.

Master Raghuram and Master Mukundan spoke on some life incidents from Sri Bhagavan Nama Bhodendra Swamigal's charitra, who established the path of Nama Siddhantha. His adishtanam at Govindapuram even today rings with Rama nama, which he propagated. Next, we had a talk on friendship from Srimad Ramayana by Master Gadai, accompanied by his brother Master Sarangan for the Vocals. Miss Savika and Miss Snigdha concluded the program by highlighting the importance of a Guru by expounding on Sri Adi Shankaracharya and his Guru Ashtakam.



June 2

On the auspicious occasion of Ekadasi (2 June 2024), a noble initiative was launched by Namadwaar Singapore to perform Tulsi Pooja in the divine presence of Sri Madhurisakhi sametha Sri Premikavaradhan.

As Sri swamiji sings in a Madhurageetham "Tulasi poojaiyal kannan magizhgindran" - Lord Sri Krishna is very pleased when one performs Tulsi pooja and chants the Mahamantra.

About 40 blessed devotees worshipped the holy Tulsi plant and chanted Mahamantra as guided by our Priest and Purana Ithihasa tutor Jana ji. The Tulsi plants were then given away to the devotees as prasadam so that they can water the plant and chant Mahamantra everyday - for auspiciousness, well-being and prosperity.



TULSI

THE SACRED PLANT

Tulsi, the holy plant, holds immense cultural, religious, and medicinal significance, particularly in South Asian countries like India. In Hinduism, Tulsi is considered sacred and is often found planted in the courtyards of homes and temples. It is believed to purify the environment and ward off negative energies. The plant is seen as an incarnation of the goddess Lakshmi, symbolizing prosperity and well-being. Her presence is said to bring harmony to the household.

Did You Know

Tulsi is scientifically classified as *Ocimum sanctum* or *Ocimum tenuiflorum*, it belongs to the Lamiaceae family

Hence, Tulsi plays a central role in various religious ceremonies and rituals such as Tulsi Pooja & Tulsi Vivah. Apart from her cultural significance, the Tulsi plant is used for its medicinal properties all around the world, serving as an active ingredient in many medications. This has resulted in numerous extensive studies to understand the medicinal properties of this plant.

The findings primarily attributed these properties to its rich phytochemical composition:

Antimicrobial :

It fights against bacteria, viruses, and fungi, making it useful in treating infections

Immunomodulatory :
Modulates the immune system by promoting immune balance

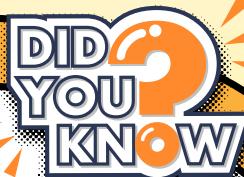
Adaptogenic Properties:
Tulsi helps the body adapt to stress and promoting overall well-being.

Anti-inflammatory:

It has anti-inflammatory properties that can help reduce inflammation and associated health conditions.

Antioxidant Activity:

Contains phenolic compounds & flavonoids that protect against oxidative stress.



Active Constituents of Tulsi

Eugenol:
Primary component responsible for its aromatic scent & antimicrobial properties

Rosmarinic acid:
Provides antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits.

Ocimumosides A and B:
Active compounds with adaptogenic and stress-relieving effects.

SCIENCE & SCRIPTURES

EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF TIME IN THE ŚRĪMAD
BHĀGAVATAM: CYCLICALITY, RELATIVITY, AND THE
CONFLUENCE WITH MODERN SCIENCE

Written by: Master Vishveshwaran Sridharan

In our schooling days, we would have all learnt about great scientists like Sir Isaac Newton and Sri Srinivasa Ramanujan, who have all made it their life goal to understand the science governing the world. One such scientist that we all would have heard and known about is Albert Einstein. Popularly known for discovering the theory of Gravity just because of an apple, he has gone on to discover a plethora of scientific concepts. One such Concept is that of Einstein's Theory of Relativity where he discusses two important principles :

1. Special Relativity
2. General Relativity

According to Einstein's theory, time is relative and can vary based on the speed of the observer and the gravitational field. For instance, time moves slower for an astronaut traveling at high speeds in space compared to someone on Earth.

Einstein's concept of special Relativity deals with the relationship between space and time in the absence of gravity. It introduces two main principles: the constancy of the speed of light and the relativity of simultaneity with Time Dilation being its consequence.

SCIENCE & SCRIPTURES

SPECIAL RELATIVITY

Invariance of the Speed of Light: According to Special Relativity, the speed of light in a vacuum is constant and independent of the motion of the light source or observer.

Relativity of Simultaneity: Events that are simultaneous for one observer may not be simultaneous for another moving observer.

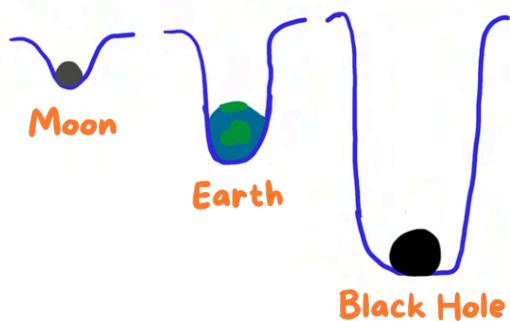
Time Dilation: Moving clocks tick slower than stationary clocks relative to an observer. This effect becomes noticeable at speeds close to the speed of light.

GENERAL RELATIVITY

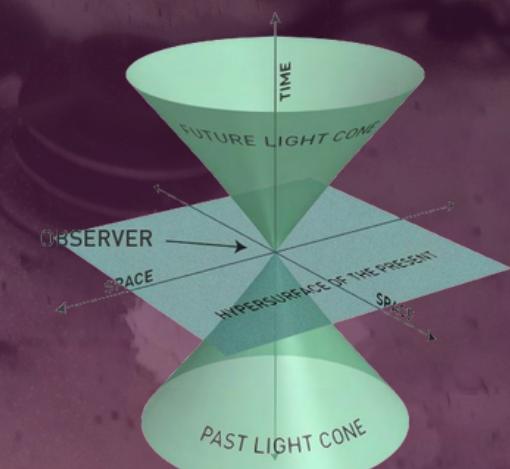
Equivalence Principle: Acceleration due to gravity is indistinguishable from acceleration due to uniform motion.

Curved Spacetime: Massive objects such as stars and planets warp spacetime around them, causing the curvature that we perceive as gravity

Geodesics: The paths that objects follow in curved spacetime, which are the straightest paths possible in that geometry.



The Gravity well, describes the gravitational pull that a large body exerts in space. The moon has the least gravitational pull and the black hole the most! The gravity well describes special relativity.



Light cone as partition in spacetime; perspective three-dimensional spacetime map showing eastward, northward, and time locations of events occurring on a flat plane in space.

SCIENCE & SCRIPTURES

Einstein's Theory of Relativity revolutionized physics by unifying space, time, and gravity into a single framework. However, these concepts discovered by Einstein have already been mapped out by rishis and sages of ancient India 1000s of years ago.

This proof of concept can be found in Srimad Bhagavatha Purana, one of the 18 puranas, which presents a complex and profound understanding of time.

Srimad Bhagavatam presents a relative view of time, suggesting that time is experienced differently across various realms and by different beings, depending on their cosmic positions and states of consciousness.

In the higher planetary systems such as Svarga (heavenly planets) and Brahmaloka (the abode of Brahma), time moves much more slowly compared to Earth. For example, a day in Brahmaloka equals millions of Earth years. This slower passage of time reflects the advanced spiritual consciousness and longevity of the beings inhabiting these realms.

Srimad Bhagavatham continues that for the middle Planetary System such as the earth (Bhu Loka), time is experienced in a balanced manner, familiar to human beings. The durations of days, months, and years are relatively short, and life spans are considerably shorter compared to the higher realms.

तयोः समुच्चयो मासः पितृणां तदहर्निशम् ।
द्वौ तावृतुः षडयनं दक्षिणं चोत्तरं दिवि ॥ ११ ॥

Srimad Bhagavatham 3.11.11

अयने चाहनी प्राहुर्वत्सरो द्वादश स्मृतः ।
संवत्सरशतं नृणां परमायुर्निरूपितम् ॥ १२ ॥

Srimad Bhagavatham 3.11.12

These verses explain that on the Pitaa planets, two fortnights together form one month, which equals one full day and night. Two such months make up a season, and six months constitute a full journey of the sun from south to north. In contrast, two such solar journeys constitute one day and night for the demigods, and this cycle represents one complete calendar year for humans, who typically live up to a hundred years.

SCIENCE & SCRIPTURES

Srimad Bhagavtham then goes further to say that in realms such as Patala, a lower planetary system, time moves more quickly relative to Earth. Beings in these realms experience a more intense passage of time, reflecting their states of consciousness and the nature of their environments.

These Rishis must have realized that these concepts might be hard to understand, hence in the same Srimad Bhagavatham, they have given us several stories that illustrate the relativity of time, emphasizing how differently time is perceived in various cosmic realms.

One of the most notable stories is that of King Kakudmi and his daughter Revati. Seeking advice from Brahmā regarding a suitable husband for Revati, they visit Brahmā's abode. They wait briefly for Brahmā to finish his musical performance. Upon their return to Earth, they find that many ages (yugas) have passed, and their contemporaries are long gone. This story vividly demonstrates the drastic difference in the perception of time between Brahmaloka and Earth.

Another such example is that of Narada muni's travels. Narada Muni, a celestial sage who can travel freely across different realms, often observes and comments on the varying passage of time. His ability to move between these realms highlights the differences in temporal experiences and the relativity of time.

Srimad Bhāgavatam's concepts of cyclical and relative time bear intriguing similarities to modern scientific theories, creating a fascinating dialogue between ancient scripture and contemporary science theorized by Albert Einstein. This scientific view parallels Srimad Bhāgavatam's depiction of time moving differently in various cosmic realms. The notion that time can stretch and contract based on external conditions finds resonance in both the Bhāgavatam and modern physics.

Another concept from Physics that we might have heard of is Time Dilation in Space. Time dilation is a fascinating phenomenon predicted by Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity, which describes how time passes differently for observers in different states of motion.

Stay tuned as this will be discussed in the next edition of the newsletter!

To be Continued....

WHISPERS OF DIVINITY

UNVEILING SRIMAD BHAGAVATHAM'S TALES

Written by: Miss Shreya Sridharan

Among the different paths to reach god, Bhakthi Yoga has been extolled to be one of the easiest paths. Prahalada teaches us Navavidha Bhakthi, the nine ways to perform bhakthi for God.

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥

**sravanam kirtanam visnoh smaranam pada-sevanam |
arcanaam vandanam dasyam sakhyam atma-nivedanam ||**

An extraordinary example of performing bhakthi for God through Keerthana & Smarana is the Story of Dhruva, who saw God when he was only five years old! In Srimad Bhagavatham, Canto 4, we get to read and hear about the story of Dhruva. Dhruva was born in the dynasty coming down from Svayambhuva Manu, the son of Lord Brahma. He was the glorious son of King Uttanapada who had two wives named Suniti and Suruchi. Both queens had one son each. Dhruva was the son of Suniti. and Uttama was the son of Suruchi. Suniti was very wise and righteous, whereas Suruchi was the king's favourite consort. King Uttanapada was more affectionate to Queen Suruchi and in due course of time, he started neglecting Suniti.

Suniti lived away from the King, raising Dhruva without revealing his father's identify. When Dhruva turned five, he asked his mother who his father was. When Sunithi explained to him that his father is King Utthaanapaadha, overjoyed, Dhruva ran to the palace to see his father. He ran all the way to the King's court and saw Uttama playing on the king's lap. Queen Suruchi stood next to the king, admiring her son Uttama. Dhruva yearned to sit on his father's lap as well. Dhruva rushed eagerly and climbed onto his father's lap.

Just by looking at this young boy's tejas, the King knew that it was his other son who had come to see him. Dhruva climbed on to his father's lap. Immediately, 'Get down!' commanded Queen Suruchi. 'You do not have the qualification to sit on the king's lap!', she said as she dragged Dhruva down and pushed him down the stairs. The king looked at the hurt on Dhruva's face but still refrained from supporting him as he did not want to argue with his wife.

Harshly, Suruchi scolded him saying that he could only sit on the king's lap if he was her son! She even said, "Go to the forest, meditate upon the Lord and seek a boon to take birth as my son".

Dhruva felt angry and humiliated. He felt sad that even his father hadn't defended him. He ran to see his mother Suniti with tears in his eyes and narrated the entire situation. Suniti lifted Dhruva onto her lap and consoled him. She encouraged Dhruva to take shelter of the Supreme God for he is the one true father for all.

After hearing this, Dhruva, only five years old, set out to the forest to search for Lord Vishnu and ask him for the cherished wish of being able to sit on his father's lap. Dhruva, set out to the forest to meditate on God.



WHISPERS OF DIVINITY

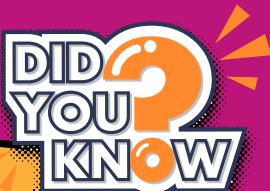
UNVEILING SRIMAD BHAGAVATHAM'S TALES

When God decides to shower grace, he always does it through a Guru. Thus, Sage Narada met Dhruva on his way to the forest and initiated him on Dwadasakshari mantra and asked him to find a peaceful spot in the forest and chant that mantra.

Sage Narada also described the appearance of Lord Vishnu and asked Dhruva to meditate on this form of the Lord by chanting the mantra. Dhruva found a peaceful spot and started to meditate on the Lord. With the strength provided by his Guru, he managed to do rigorous penance with little to eat at first, and then completely went without food and became a log of wood, unshakeable in his penance within just six months!

Lord Narayana, pleased with Dhruva's devotion, appeared before the boy. Dhruva was so overwhelmed to see Lord Naraya that he couldn't speak. Once the Lord touched Dhruva's cheek with a conch shell, Dhruva was able to sing beautiful praises for the Lord known as the Dhruva Stuthi (SBM 4.09). Pleased with Dhruva's devotion, Lord Narayana blessed him and told Dhruva that he would be a great emperor and rule his kingdom for 36,000 years, attain Dhruvapada (pole star) and eventually the Lord.

Dhruva charithram serves to show us how obstacles in life can become opportunities with the help of a Guru. This story also teaches us the significance of determination and devotion in attaining the Lord's blessings. No matter how young or old we are, by praying to the Lord and staying dedicated, we can overcome any difficulties and find true happiness. It also teaches us that Bhakthi combined with Vairagya, would solve all our problems and lead us to God.



EVEN TODAY, WE CAN SEE THE DHRUVA STAR AT NIGHT, IT'S THE STAR THAT SHINES THE BRIGHTEST !!

THE STARS THAT WE SEE WITH OUR NAKED EYE ARE NOT MORE THAN 10,000 LIGHT YEARS AWAY. SO THE LIGHT THAT WE SEE LEFT THE STARS SEVERAL YEARS AGO !



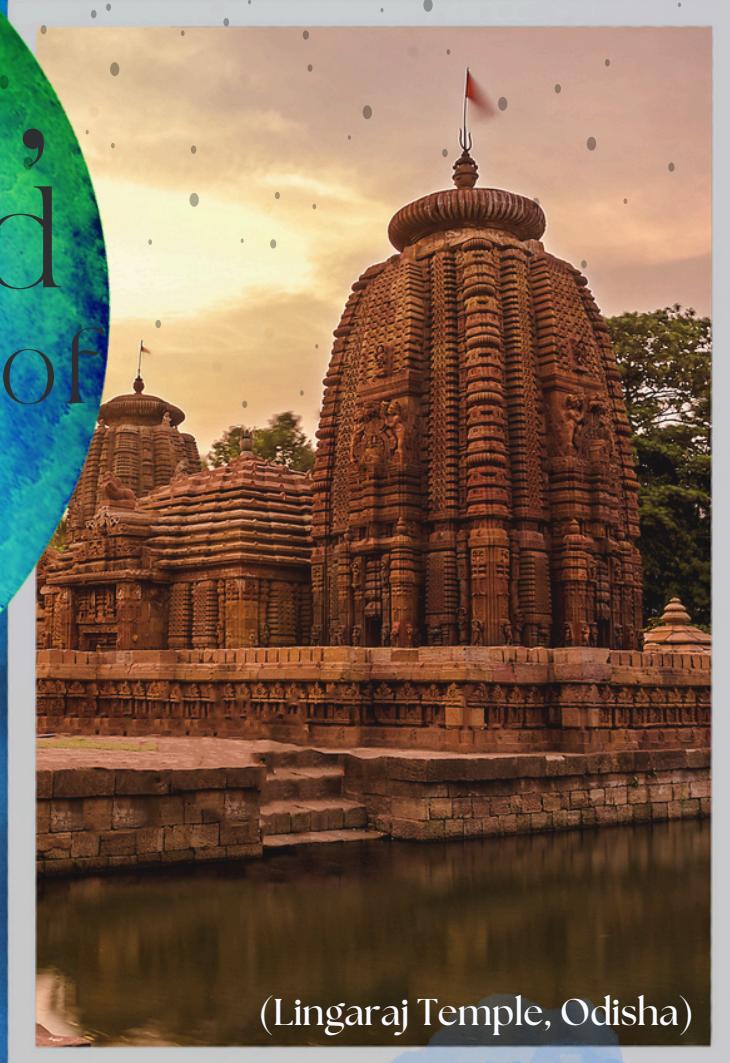
LOCAL

TREASURES



Stories, Culture, and Hindu temples of Southeast Asia

Written by: Miss Sanjana Raghuraman



Stories, Culture, and Hindu temples of Southeast Asia

Written by: Miss Sanjana Raghuraman

Introduction:

In this article, we delve into the integral role of storytelling in any culture and how it reflects the core values of the culture. We will also explore how storytelling connects with artistic expression, architecture, and temples.

Finally, we briefly discuss the influence of Hinduism on Southeast Asia.

Importance of storytelling:

Studying ancient civilisations has fascinated many. In this pursuit, one of the first things we would examine is their folklore, their scriptures and stories. It is intriguing to see how something as simple as storytelling is such an integral part of cultures and can be instrumental in shaping the perspectives about it.

Indian culture and heritage are ancient, rich, and vibrant. It prompts us to wonder, what stories have the ancients passed down! What gripping cautionary tales, what dazzling romances, what fragments of great wisdom condensed into simple stories! The little bedtime stories that we tell children are often part of larger, more complex stories that reflect broader societal thought processes, values, concepts, and philosophies. Often overlooked, simple storytelling can be our gateway to begin understanding a culture.

By analysing these stories, we begin to identify the common themes that help us better understand ancient Indian history with better context. Stories tell us what values and behaviours a society admires and admonishes.

For example through the storytelling of Srimad Ramayana, we as audience are encouraged to empathise with Sita, condemn Ravana, and support Sri Rama as he ventures with an army of vanaras to save Sita. We connect with these characters and learn about narratives such as the triumph of dharma (justice) over adharma (injustice) and the sanctity of marriage to name a few. Stories have the power to beautifully depict to us such concepts which are highly regarded in our culture. Decoding these would help us better understand our rich culture and heritage.

Stories, Culture, and Hindu temples of Southeast Asia

Hindu temples of Southeast Asia:

These legends, values, and pearls of wisdom are woven deeply into the fabric of a society. They manifest through communal celebrations, behaviour, manner of speech, literature, music, art, monuments, and many more.

Interestingly, places rich in these cultural elements tend to be temples, making them one of the easiest starting points to begin understanding our culture. Our culture is vast and complex. So, focussing on concentrated hubs like temples could be a logical starting point.

Temples are treasure troves of culture, art, history, science, wisdom, theology, and philosophy. Their existence and reverence already imply the value that our ancestors placed on wisdom, emotional depth and the divine.

Stories that travel and evolve:

Stories are told and retold, interpreted and spiced-up. As such, Srimad Ramayana is an example of an epic that spread to multiple Southeast Asian countries, such as Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Indonesia, Mongolia and Singapore.

This can be seen in Cambodian literature, where Srimad Ramayana is known as Reamker, which translates to the Glory of Sri Ram. This is an epic with Buddhist influences, written in the native Khmer language. It includes unique scenes as well, such as an encounter with Hanuman and the mermaid Sovann Maccha!

Stories that travel far and wide with trade routes and travellers make their way into cultures far away. In Java, Indonesia, Srimad Ramayana is portrayed through "Wayang Kulit", a traditional shadow puppet show. A picture of this is seen on the cover page of this article. These adaptations reflect how stories evolve to suit the new culture that they become a part of.

It is through stories that cultures evolve and grow. It is through stories that long enduring legacies such as temples and monuments are constructed as cultural landmarks for the whole world to behold.

(Continued in next page)

Stories, Culture, and Hindu temples of Southeast Asia

The Brihadeeswara temple in Thanjavur:

THE PINNACLE OF CHOLA ARCHITECTURE

This temple is built in a style exhibiting intricacy through minute carvings and grandeur through monumental structures.

Famously, this temple is sculpted such that the shadow of the gopuram never touched the ground where people may step on. This architectural style of grandeur and minute carvings is seen in later temples in Java and other places in Southeast Asian locations, highlighting the influence the Chola dynasty had over the region.

These temples across Southeast Asia narrate stories that are passed down by different cultures, and encapsulate their unique narratives. Temples reflect the depth of thought, technological prowess, and wisdom of the people at the time that they were built, making them a time capsule for future generations to study and appreciate.

So how has Sanatana Dharma been reflected in Singapore? In our upcoming discussions, we will discuss the various Hindu temples in Singapore and attempt to decode the hidden wisdom of our great ancestors, and the culture which is an inherent part of us.

Stay tuned as we embark on this journey of discovery together!



Brihadeeshwara Temple, Thanjavur

Singapore - The Food Paradise

Written by: Miss Shreya Sridharan

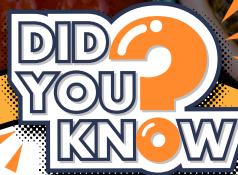
Singapore's reputation as a food paradise is deeply rooted in its multicultural heritage, where culinary diversity mirrors the nation's unique history. Food has long been an integral part of Singaporean culture, carried over generations by our ancestors who brought with them a rich tapestry of tastes upon settling here.

Despite being a small island city-state at the crossroads of Southeast Asia, Singapore is celebrated not only for its economic prowess and futuristic skyline but also for its remarkably diverse and delectable food scene. This cultural melting pot, drawing influences from Chinese, Malay, Indian, and other ethnic groups, has fostered a unique culinary landscape that is both eclectic and tantalizing.

The local enthusiasm for food is so ingrained that it has even inspired popular schoolyard chants incorporating the names of famous Singaporean dishes:

Orh-ya-peh-ya-som-balik-a-roti-prata-char-kueh-teow!

Let's delve into some of the iconic dishes that define Singapore's food scene, rooted in the cultural influences that shape it!



UNESCO's recognition of Singapore's hawker culture on its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in December 2020 further underscored the significance of our food heritage.

Historical & Cultural significance

Singapore's food culture is deeply intertwined with its history of migration and trade. From its early days as a bustling port under British colonial rule to its present-day status as a vibrant, independent nation, Singapore has welcomed people from across Asia and beyond. Each wave of immigrants brought with them their culinary traditions, ingredients, and cooking techniques, enriching the tapestry of flavors that characterize Singaporean cuisine.

Chinese Influence



The culinary heritage of major Chinese dialect groups such as Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, and Hainanese is celebrated in Singapore. Through their dishes, they exemplify the simplicity and depth of Chinese flavors adapted to local tastes.

Malay and Indonesian Influence



Contributions from Malays, native to the region, and Indonesians have introduced aromatic spices and cooking techniques, showcasing the bold flavors and vibrant colors typical of Malay cuisine.

Indian Influence



Indian immigrants, predominantly Tamil, brought with them a love for spices and vegetarian dishes that have become integral to Singapore's food culture. Dishes such as Roti Prata, Briyani, and Masala Dosa are beloved island-wide, reflecting the rich diversity within Indian cuisine.

Peranakan Influence



A highlight of Singaporean food culture is Peranakan cuisine, born from the intermarriage between Chinese immigrants and local Malays known as Peranakans or Straits Chinese. Peranakan dishes like Kueh showcase a unique fusion of Chinese and Malay flavors, enriched with indigenous ingredients.

Dining Culture & culinary experiences

Singaporeans take immense pride in their culinary heritage, reflected in a vibrant tapestry of hawker centers, traditional Kopitiams, high-end restaurants, innovative food courts & multi-cultural cuisines.

With the Hawker Centers being the heart of Singapore's food culture, iconic destinations like Maxwell Food Centre, Lau Pa Sat, and Chinatown Complex Food Centre are popular gathering spots for locals and tourists alike. We then have Kopitiams, traditional coffee shops, which are nostalgic venues where locals enjoy kopi (local coffee) or teh (tea) with kaya toast.

Singapore's culinary landscape extends beyond hawker fare to encompass Michelin-starred restaurants and modern food courts renowned for innovative interpretations of traditional flavors and ingredients. Establishments like Odette, Burnt Ends, along with food courts for Japanese and Korean cuisines have garnered international acclaim for their impeccable service and exquisite cuisine.

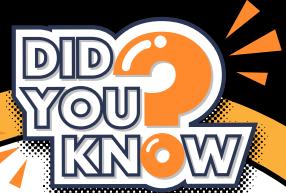


Dining Culture & culinary experiences

Singapore's food culture is dynamic, constantly evolving with new trends and culinary innovations that blend traditional techniques with modern influences. Initiatives such as the Michelin Guide Singapore and the Singapore Food Festival celebrate hawkers and small eateries renowned for their culinary prowess and commitment to quality. These efforts not only honor Singapore's culinary heritage but also inspire younger generations to embrace traditional cooking methods and flavors.

Singapore's food culture epitomizes its rich history, multicultural diversity, and passion for gastronomy. From humble beginnings in hawker stalls to the heights of Michelin-starred dining, Singapore offers a culinary journey that reflects its cosmopolitan character and ensures it remains a must-visit destination for food lovers worldwide.

Interestingly, many parallels can be drawn between the plethora of cuisines found in our Indian and Singaporean Local Cuisines. Various aspects of Indian cuisine have similarities with Singaporean food due to the historical and cultural connections between the two regions.



On Singapore's Red Dot series, Genevieve Lee, the runner-up of Masterchef Singapore Season 1, delves into the extraordinary journey of feeding 12,000 devotees at Sri Srinivasa Perumal temple during Purattasi, a sacred month for Hindus. Her Documented journey can be found on CNA's Red Dot channel.

Dining Culture & culinary experiences

Spices and Aromatics:

Both Indian and Singaporean cuisines are known for their vibrant use of spices and aromatics. Indian spices like cumin, coriander, turmeric, and cardamom are also integral to many Singaporean dishes such as Rojak and Curry. This shared culinary heritage enriches flavors and creates a common ground in taste profiles.



Rice and Bread Varieties:



Both cuisines feature a diversity of rice and bread preparations. Indian cuisine offers a range of rice dishes such as biryanis, pulao, and plain steamed rice, which are similarly enjoyed in Singaporean cuisine as Stir-fried rice. Noodle varieties like Bee Hoon, Mee Sima, Mee Goreng are very similar to our semiya dishes : Semiya payasam, Rice Sevai, Semiya upma Etc.. Bread varieties like chapati, naan, and dosa from Indian cuisine have also found popularity among Singaporeans. This unique Peranakan flavour that Singapore has is very similar to our Coconut rice, and ‘kalandha sadam’ (mixed rice) that we make at home for special festivals and occasions.

Sweet and Savory Snacks:

Both culinary traditions feature a plethora of sweet and savory snacks. Indian sweets like laddoos, jalebis, and gulab jamun are enjoyed during festivals and special occasions, mirroring Singaporean favorites such as kueh and ondeh ondeh. These snacks highlight a shared love for rich flavors and textures. Gula Melaka desserts that are famous in Singapore is similar to the payasams to which we add palm sugar as a sweetener. The famous Pau that is a signature in any hawker centre is similar to our very own Kozhakattai and idlis.



In these ways, many of our traditional cuisines and flavours are captured in Singapore’s diverse food dishes. Even the culinary techniques used in both cuisines often involve slow cooking, roasting, frying, and simmering to enhance flavors and textures. These techniques are evident in dishes like curries, stir-fries, and soups that are prominent in both Indian and Singaporean kitchens.

Indian and Singaporean cuisines emphasize the balance of tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent). Ingredients and dishes are often prepared to achieve this balance, promoting holistic health and well-being.

In essence, both culinary traditions celebrate diversity, balance flavours, and uphold cultural values through their rich and varied offerings.



Now that we have all caught up on Exploring our Rich Food Culture, here is a fun game of word search to identify some of our popular and unique food dishes.

P	G	U	I	N	A	Y	I	R	B	C	V
A	B	J	V	K	H	U	I	N	R	D	V
N	X	F	F	B	U	I	S	B	A	W	D
D	L	Q	F	Q	J	E	I	K	D	F	D
A	E	D	H	U	Z	V	H	B	A	O	O
N	K	Y	F	Y	P	A	W	K	V	U	S
C	E	V	U	L	Y	Y	E	J	E	H	A
A	F	Q	H	I	N	Z	R	N	Q	T	M
K	L	U	M	Y	P	A	U	R	Z	K	N
E	A	E	A	U	K	N	A	X	U	C	V
A	S	N	Z	P	A	H	T	N	T	C	J
G	U	L	A	M	E	L	A	K	A	I	W

DOSA

VADA

SEMIYA

GULAMELAKA

CURRYPUFF

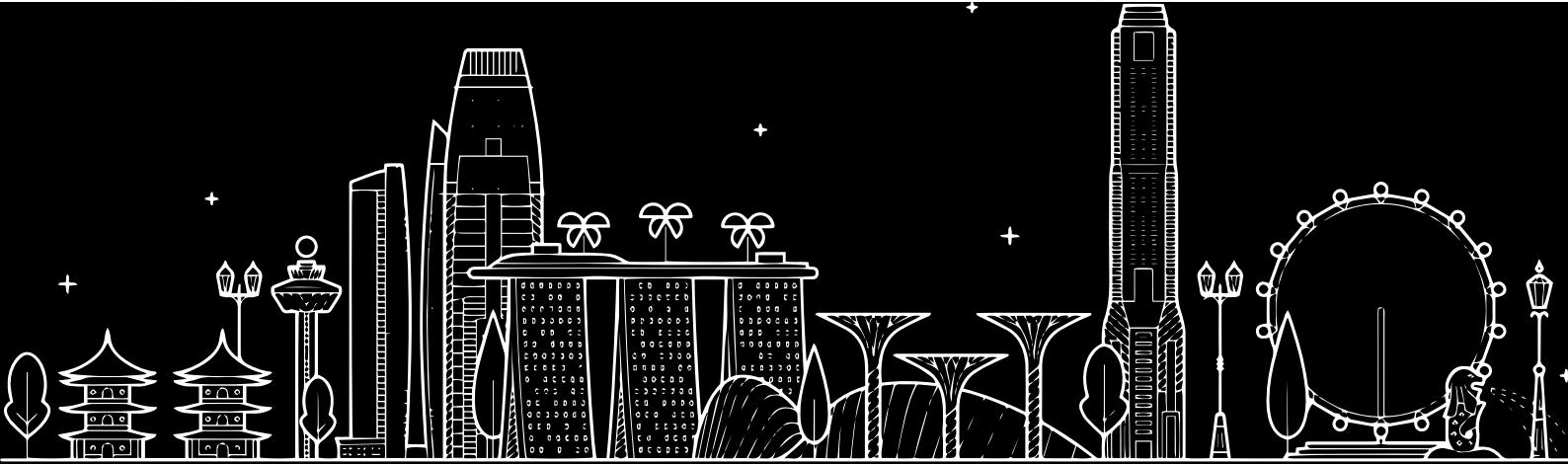
KUEH

PAU

NAAN

BRIYANI

PANDANCAKE



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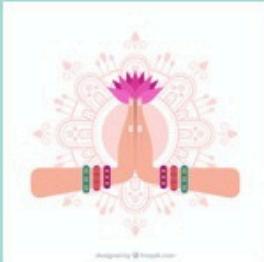
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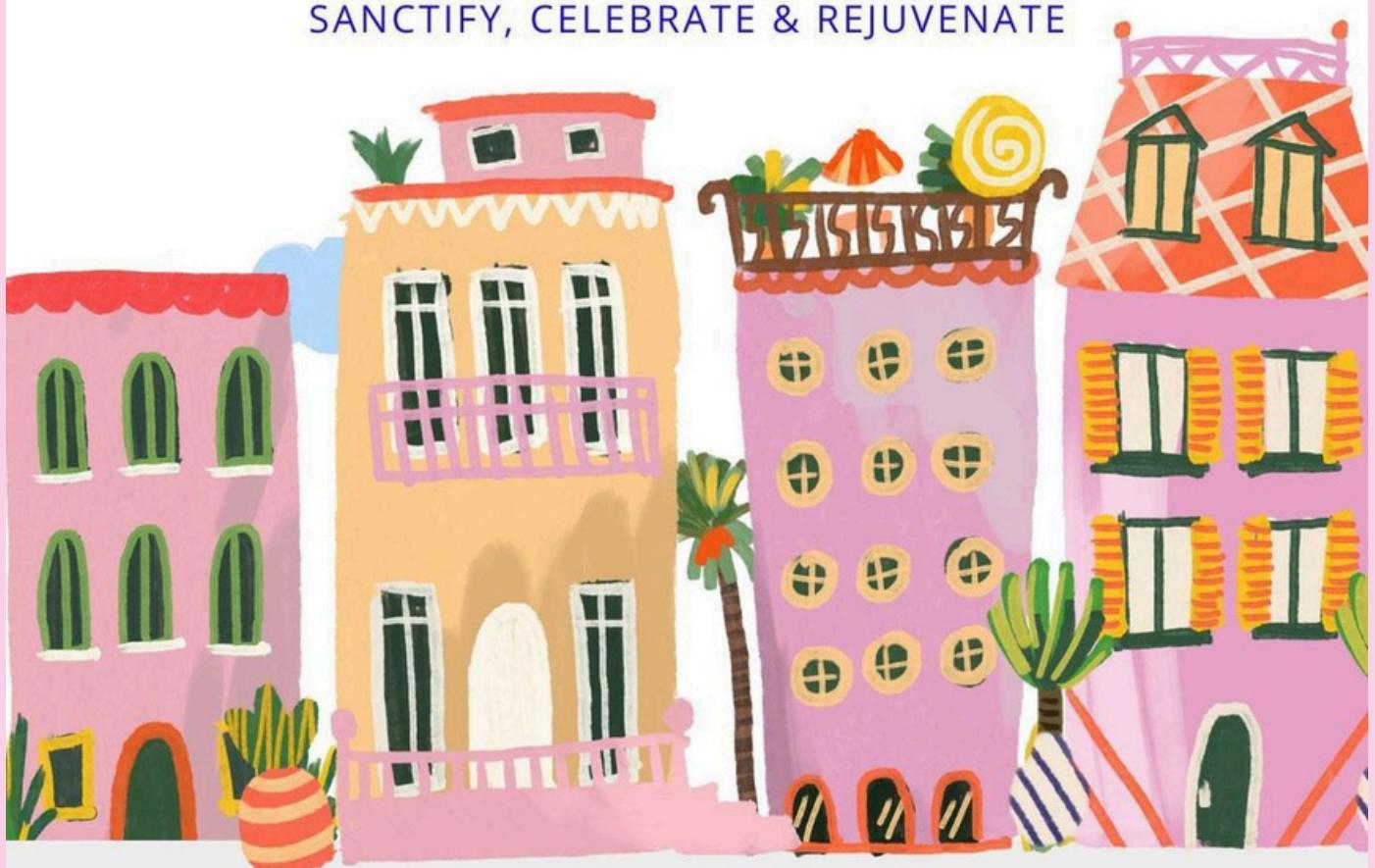
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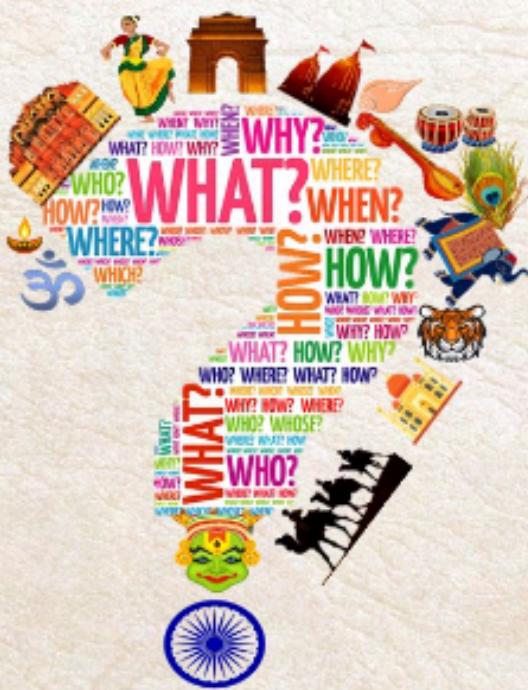
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