

As my artist's statement explains, my work is utterly incomprehensible and therefore full of deep significance

— Calvin to Hobbes

CELEBRATE

THE SPEAKING TREE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 13, 2013



EVENTS



**Sangeet-Nritya Mahotsava**  
Swami Hariadas and Tansen music programme followed by dance recital at Sri Sathya Sai International Centre, Pragati Vihar, Lodhi Road  
January 13, 6.30 pm

Satsang

Ramesh Bijlani to talk on  
Suami Vivekananda at  
Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Hauz Khas  
January 13, 10 am to 11.30 am  
Call 26567863

Cultural Renaissance

International conference and exhibition on the life of Atisha  
Dipankara Jnanashri at  
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 11, Man Singh Road  
January 16-18, 11 am onwards  
Call 23388155



Inner Engineering

Isha Yoga programme with Sadhguru at Thyagaraj Sports Complex, INA  
January 18-20; call 9650092100

Osho Sanyaas Day

Swami Ravindra Bharti to organise Osho Sanyaas Day at Oshodham  
44, Jhatikra Road, Panduvala  
Khard, January 19, all day  
Call 25319026

This Week

January 13: Lohri, Bogi Pandigai  
January 14: Makara Saneranti  
Pongal, Makaradi Snana  
Tila Sankranti, Magha Bihu  
Birthday of Sant Parmanand  
Purna Kumbh begins in Prayag  
January 15: Mattu Pongal  
January 18: Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti (Gurpurab)

# Magical White Lines

Kolam, an integral part of all celebrations, symbolises happiness and prosperity, says ARUNA SRINIVASAN

It was 4.30 am. Signs of dawn were just emerging. Some women had just begun their day — sprinkling water on their front courtyards and sweeping them clean. In a while, the whole street would be decked up with beautiful white drawings on the floor.

I picked up my own little container of *kolam* powder and began drawing in front of my apartment. As the geometrical pattern unfolded, I knew my day had begun on a positive note.

Welcome to the world of kolams, a traditional passion that almost every Tamil household indulges in all through the year — but specifically during the Tamil month of Margazhi: December 15 to January 14.

Margazhi Special

Kolams are line drawings done with rice powder. The idea is to feed birds, insects and ants with the rice powder, besides beautifying your doorstep with decorative lines. Although kolam is generally drawn in the morning — some do it in the evenings also — they are special during the month of Margazhi, when pumpkin flowers perched on cow dung balls are placed on the kolams to enhance the beauty of the intricate designs. Next morning, they are removed, made into cow dung pies and left to be dried in the sun.

After Margazhi, the next month in the Tamil calendar is Thai: January 15 to February 15. Tamils celebrate the first day of this month as Pongal, a harvest festival. On this day, the 30 days' collection of dried cow dung pies with pumpkin flowers are used as fuel to cook the special delicacy, *pongal* in an earthen pot in a clay oven.

The smoke from cow dung pie keeps off bad bacteria from the atmosphere. Though the tradition of using cow dung pie as fuel has almost disappeared, the kolams have survived, adopting notes from different cultures along the way. Kolams today have shades of colours — literally — with flower petals and colour powder.

An integral part of any celebration, kolam symbolises happiness and prosperity. It is also a sign of welcome. Perhaps, the belief that kolam invites Lakshmi — the goddess of wealth — into your home is one main reason why this tradition continues with so much fervour!

Today, kolams have cut across social milieus, becoming an occasion for private and public participation. There are kolam competitions in almost every



A KOLAM COMPETITION IN PROGRESS ON THE STREETS OF CHENNAI (FILE PHOTO)

neighbourhood in Chennai and other cities of Tamil Nadu. Kolam today has many male enthusiasts as well.

Even as Chennaites take a dip in the river of music during the annual music festival, their mornings herald the joy of creativity with kolams — often done with light-hearted competitiveness when each household competes with the other to draw the best and biggest kolams. So much so, many would try to upstage their neighbours by waking up early and filling a major chunk of the street with their kolams. Some smarter ones would finish the drawing the previous night itself!

Exercise For The Brain

And on special occasions like festivals, the white lines would be highlighted with red borders, called *kaavi* or *chemman* — a powder made from red soil. The red border is not only a sign of cheer and prosperity, it is also believed that the red-bordered kolam keeps evil forces away.

On special occasions, the design of the kolam gets special too — there are *kalyanakolam*, or wedding kolam, and *paidikakolam* or festival kolam. Another variation is *izhaikolam*, drawn on some festival days like Janmashtami and Karthigai Deepam — the festival of lights in the Tamil month of Karthigai. Instead of dried powder, wet rice

paste would be used to draw patterns. For Janmashtami, drawing the toddler Krishna's tiny footsteps with wet rice paste is a delight for many. Certain kolam designs like *Hrudhayakalam*, *Kirubenkolam* and the seven different kolams of the week have spiritual value. On another side of the spectrum, kolams are brain teasers like Sudoku. And the kolams drawn by joining dots are excellent exercise for the brain.

Although kolam is seen more as a Hindu tradition, modern kolams have no caste barriers. Modern motifs and themes could include Christmas, Independence Day and New Year. You have kolams high-

lighting noble causes too — like AIDS or education. The themes vary depending on individual creativity.

It is believed that a bare door entrance without any kolam symbolises negative energy or mourning. Don't worry if you are caught up in the pressures of hectic schedules and have no time. Kolam stencils in a wide range of designs are available in the market. All you have to do is dust kolam powder on the stencil sheet to get a beautiful design at your doorstep. Easier still, you can try colourful sticker kolams. You have to just stick them on the floor at the entrance to make sure that Lakshmi stays with you! ■

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SACRED HERB



Lemongrass

According to an ancient Malaysian legend, warriors believed that if they rubbed lemongrass on their bodies, while reciting a special prayer, they would be shielded by an impregnable magical cloak. According to another south-east Asian belief, planting lemongrass around the house protects residents from dragons and serpents. It is also believed that drinking lemongrass-infused tea develops psychic abilities and divination. Myths apart, the plant is a super-herb and has been used for thousands of years for both culinary and medicinal purposes. Lemongrass is a tropical grass that smells like lemon. A native of southern India, the plant grows in abundance in other south-east Asian countries like Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia. Lemongrass contains many compounds, oils, minerals and vitamins that are known to have anti-oxidant and disease preventing properties. The leaves and stems are high in folic acid, vitamins A, B1, B5, B6 and C, besides potassium, zinc, calcium, iron, manganese, copper, and magnesium. Lemongrass helps reduce pitta and kapha doshas and neutralises vata dosha. Some medical journals claim that lemongrass even kills cancer cells without harming normal cells.



FESTIVE SPIRIT

# Where To After Death?



DADAJI

The substance is One and that alone is the eternal substance. There is no vanishing, no destruction of it. It is the supreme integral existence. We are the eternal substance of that unfragmented Supreme Being. Still you think, at death, a person has gone somewhere. One does not go anywhere. There is something called death as we describe it. But it is God who leaves the body and He doesn't go anywhere. His vibration stops in the body. But until the individual mind function is over, the mind remains dissatisfied. Unless this mind is fully satisfied, it will continue to come into this world. People who were together, come together again.

Infinite Within

In the vacuous region of the heart, which is the Infinite within, two sounds are constantly chanting. When these two sounds of *Mahanaam*, or God's name go off, the mind shrinks, a person dies and gets merged in pervasive existence. When the mind can resort to another body, it buds forth again.

Life has no death. It is eternal. What we call death or end of life is actually a phase and is concerned only with the body. Body consists of matters which dissolve in time to their original form. But the Self has no dissolution. You have

come for a few days, not forever. Why should you bother for anything?

No one has a right to put a violent end to one's own life. Live a normal life doing your work, without coveting the wealth of others and enjoying Him.

When God leaves the body, He does not go anywhere. And we, a bunch of fools, do all kinds of funeral ceremonies for His benefit! Such rites are only for mercenary interest. The deceased for whom we perform rites receives nothing. Funeral rituals are meaningless and full of superstition.



It is a business for priests and it takes us away from Truth. How many days we can or do live is not important. How we lived or live is important. Keep it in mind. We have come to another's house. We must leave it someday. He will come and take you off.

The Divine play is intrinsically bipolar, having positive and negative, ups and downs, good and bad. Oscillations between them provide the basis for all creative possibilities of His play. When the

game is over, the two poles coalesce into mere existence, all existents having disappeared. Action and reaction hold the stage. When the reaction gathers magnitude, one cries for succour. Then comes death. But the reaction persists and that leads to rebirth.

Just A Change

Reincarnation? What do you mean by that? When we give up the body, then and there He catches the mind. After that it is a question of time, maybe just now, maybe one day, maybe a few years later, you come back in a different body. Unless and until one's *parabdha* — destined unfolding process of one's life — is full, until one is merged with God, one's mind will have to come back in a body in this world.

The elements of the body transform and change. The combination of hydrogen and oxygen form water, again under certain conditions, oxygen and hydrogen separate and go back to their former condition. We feel nothing for oxygen or hydrogen, so we feel nothing about their transformation or change. We feel sorry for the death of our mother, father, or whoever it may be, because of an attachment. Death is nothing but a change or transformation. Try to understand the origin. If you catch hold of the root, then you will understand the branches. ■

Today is Dadaji's birthday. His name as a householder was Amiya Roy Chowdhury, www.dadaji.info

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