CAUVERY'S AGE-OLD MIRACLE
Category : May 1993
Published by Anonymous on May. 01, 1993

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Two miles above sea level in the Brahmagiri hill ranges of Coorg, India, thousands of jostling devotees are waiting anxiously. Suddenly they hush to the faint sound of gurgling water. The gurgle gushes, and they all surge forward. Even a vigilant fortress of police can't stop them. Entire families are frantically pushing, prying, stretching and grabbing for tirtha (holy water) now tinged red with kumkum and flooding through the fingers of faithful devotees pressed shoulder to shoulder near the edge of a sparkling new body of water.

With the precision of a clock, the Cauvery has erupted once again - unexplainably - from the guts of the earth right on schedule just like last year, and the year before.

As local resident Narayan Achar explains it to India Today magazine: "For centuries, every year, on the day of Tulasankramana, the Cauvery is reborn here." And that's about all anyone knows for sure. The rest is a mystery, considered a miracle by many - Caugary's age-old miracle.

This sacred event called Muhurta (moment), occurs every year at approximately the same time. By the priests almanac, a more precise time or muhurta is determined to be roughly three hours earlier than the year before. Last year on October 17, it took place at 11:15 AM.

A variety of people, religious and otherwise, attend the Muhurta in Talacauvery, the small village where all of this occurs. Talacauvery itself figures prominately into the noteworthy popularity of the Muhurta. With a population of a only 20 cowherders, Talacauvery is humbly nestled in a green carpeted paradise of peace, invaded only during this festival, once each year. M. Achayya, a computer executive from Bangalore who comes every year says, "perhaps it is because it is not your regular hot, stuffy, dirty pilgrimage spot."

Once ceremoniously released upon her journey during the Muhurta, the Cauvery will course 120 miles through most of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Although years ago her yearly birthday was celebrated only locally, it now attracts pilgrims from throughout South India and even parts of North India.

According to legend, Sage Agastya was sent to the south by Brahma to cure the region of a long drought. While he was there, he married Lopamudra, the daughter of Sage Kavera, whom he carried with him in his Kamandalu (water container). One day Sage Agastya set the Kamandalu down to take a bath. While he was away, the wind knocked the Kamandalu over, and Lopamudra flowed out as the river Cauvery to assuage the drought-scorched land.

With or without legend, the mysterious story of the origin of Cauvery is a mystical one fortifying great devotees with hope and faith. Faith?...that humble submission of the soul to its source in God, beyond the confines and fears of mind, body and emotions.

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