

bharatavatra

Sutradaar

A Village gets busy in inaugurating a temple



Filter Coffee: best at Matunga, Mumbai



Sholay - A childhood journey in Hindi films

Vagrant Birder: Okayama

bharatasutras

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Rudra

the dancing destroyer

I am surprised by the number of stories, the magic, the diversity and the awesome range of knowledge that is available about Rudra or Shiva. The dance of the *taandava* is what comes to the mind, and I tried to explore the subject through a short book, titled – “Rudra – the dancing destroyer”.

I enjoyed writing it up, not because I tried the impossible, that is, of writing precisely, and in a lesser number of pages. For me, that is very difficult. But I enjoyed the effort for the research that went into it. I got to read a number of books about Shiva, about the *rudra-roopa* and the *taandava* dance. The various forms of the *taandava* dance by Shiva are the magic of the Chidambaram temple. Not much is known through the various other stories that one gets to hear about Shiva.

The photograph on the cover is of the enormously tall statue of Shiva on the banks of the Ganges River at Haridwar, just near Har-ki-Paudi, at Uttarakhand. The statue is indeed extremely tall. It is taller than the nearby hill that provides a backdrop. I had to go back by about 2 kms to get a photograph without the hill so that I could get sufficient contrast. Nearby, and up close to the statue, the photographs were all black and dull. But, the statue is worth a visit and is a photographer's delight.

The book has been well received. I have been distributing it free and was also able to obtain an ISBN publishers' number for the paper and e-editions. The book is also now uploaded on the “Million Books Project” for easy reading by everyone. Two temples have asked me to give them a hundred copies each time that I would reprint the book. Such requests would make any author quite happy, I guess. Let me know if you want a copy. I will send an e-copy to you. *Om Namah Shivaaya*.



Time stops still and waits for water at the Velapur Temple, Maharashtra.

A village gets busy in inaugurating a temple...



All villagers get down to partake in the community lunch.



The newly inaugurated temple at Pawana Village

On *Ramanavami* day in 2009, I was invited to participate in an inaugural of a village temple dedicated to Lord Rama near the Pawana Lake, in Pune District. The invitation came from Mr. Garje, Municipal Ward Officer at Ulhasnagar Municipal Corporation. He is known in the villages of Raigad, Ratnagiri, Thane and Pune villages as Shri Garje Maharaj, and is famous for his splendid recitations of devotional songs to Panduranga, the deity of Pandharpur. He is known as a *Keertankar*, i.e. one who recites *keertans* (devotional hymns) written by Sant Tukaram and other saints. I was curious about this dual role of a government officer in working as a much maligned ward officer in a much maligned town, and then being respected as a devout hymn singer. I agreed and attended the inaugural of the Shri Ram temple at Pawana village on the *Ramanavami* day.



Flowers, Leaves, Rudrakshas...

The entire village was there, I guess. And so were the neighbours and others who had traveled from other villages in the Pawana Valley of the Western Ghats in Pune. The devout atmosphere was very delightful and I was invited to sit inside the core group of singers in front of the sanctum sanctorum. Nothing could have been better than to participate so closely on *Ramanavami*.

The villagers had shared the tasks, and one could see teams busy with cooking for lunch, others busy with directing the traffic, and others making sure that nobody left the village without having eaten with the entire group. Each round of eating comprised about 500 men sitting under huge tents near the temple, and about 100 women sitting near the village school.

The songs were beautiful. It was like a pilgrimage that did not have to travel anywhere. It was about visiting a temple that one could return to, again and again. It was also about a village that had invited me, and adopted me with its friendship and love and with its arms widespread to include villages from near and far. This can happen only in India, I felt, happy, to be at home with the Pawana village and its residents and its friends and its visitors.

Honest strong filter Coffee: *best at Matunga...*



Filter Coffee at New Delhi (from left); Brew at Taj – New Delhi; & honest strong filter coffee at Matunga, Mumbai

Excerpt from my blog at <http://shtories-shtuff.blogspot.com> - “Wonly Matunga Kaapi for me”

You were at paradise, as most south Indians at Matunga declared during the 60s and 70s, if you got that hot cup of kaapi to swish from the tumbler to the bowl by lifting the tumbler at least 3 feet above and pouring the hot milk-sweetened decoction accurately into the bowl.

The aroma was already felt when the kaapi had been served at your table. You could smell it from the cup on your table and you could smell it from the cups of kaapi at other tables. The smell and aroma was all around. But when you lifted the tumbler and poured the coffee down to the bowl, the aroma hit you in the face. It must be hormonal, I think. All good honest south Indians, actually all south Indians who like strong filter coffee from out of a tumbler and vessel, are good honest south Indians. There isn't any other qualification, really.

All good honest south Indians must be having a hormonal receptor to strong filter kaapi. Their poetic abilities were probably awakened at that moment of smelling strong filter kaapi. The entire world seemed happy and peaceful at that moment. The restaurant waiter, serving the hot kaapi, was now probably looking like your best friend or your favourite relative.

My uncle would savour the coffee at Ram Ashray and then proceed to the Quality Tea-Coffee shop next to the restaurant and purchase Chicory coffee powder mixed on a 50:50 ratio with Peaberry coffee powder. This, he felt, and almost 90% of Matunga of the 70s probably agreed with him. You had to brew the decoction for an hour at home before it was ready to taste the same, well, almost the same as genuine strong filter coffee from Matunga.

There was a restaurant, Amba Bhavan, at the spot where the Matunga main road met Kings' Circle. It was yet another coffee drinker's paradise. The waiters at this restaurant were as aged and prehistoric as the furniture and the unchanged decor in the place. They were probably on speaking terms or friendly nodding terms with my father and uncle in their younger days. My grandfather probably knew them and maybe even so, knew their fathers or uncles.

I hope to add to this blog page with more adventures in searching for honest, good, strong, south Indian, filter coffee in various cities and restaurants, in any other place than south India, of course. Watch this space.

Sholay – a journey in Hindi movies from childhood.



SHOLAY – The name of the movie, the sound, its dialogues and songs are the mark of the generation that we have lived by, since the 70s in India. Who does not remember Gabbar Singh and his meaty dialogues? I found this delightful photo with Amitabh, Dharmendra, Sanjeev Kumar and Amjad Khan standing together and looking very happy. It must have been a great time for them to work in the movie together and bring out a masterpiece Hindi cinema that comes back again and again. Thank you all, for giving us this bit of fun.

Golden Temple, Harmandir Sahib



A B&W photo of the Golden Temple that has the feel of a classic in history. The approach to the temple from the Akal Takht is now covered. It looks so crowded and the photo shows it so very peaceful. Of course, the B&W does not do justice to the temple since it hides the golden structure, but for those who have visited, this photo is sheer poetry. *Sat naam...*



A contrast of the room at Taj Delhi and the study space at my residence in Pune

Vagrant birders



Mute Swan at Okayama, Japan



Pintail (male) at Asahi River, near Korakuen, Okayama, Japan



Redcrested White Cranes at Korakuen Garden, Okayama

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