

शुभमस्तु
Subhamastu

अविघ्नमस्तु
Avighnamastu

विजयोस्तु
Vijayostu

आलय



संदेशः

[Aalaya Sandeshaha]
Sri Venkateswara Temple Newsletter

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Dear Devotees,

“Time flies when you are having fun” – I am sure you have heard this before. That is exactly what has happened since the inauguration of our temple in 2005. Many of you may remember the condition of the temple during the time of inauguration and how beautiful it is today. Such changes did not come overnight or without struggles. With God’s grace, your financial support and several members of our community working together, we have accomplished significant improvements to our temple. I wish to thank each and every one of you for your efforts and support throughout this process. Please join us for the fifth anniversary celebration from May 30 – June 1 and seek the blessings of Lord Venkateswara.

Recently Dr. Srikanth Dhamaraju and Mrs. Era Gupta joined the Board of Trustees and I am pleased to welcome them to the Board.

I would like to inform you that recently the Board of Trustees has selected a Vaishnavite priest for the temple and the necessary paperwork is being done to bring him from India.

Since June 2009, Swamij Adyatmanandaji, Swamiji Ashwini Prajnaa and Swamiji Anantacharya visited our temple. Keechaka Vadha dance drama was conducted in July. Kaveri Natya Yoga dance group presented a program in November. Newsletter was started in December, and Festival of India/Health Fair was conducted in February 2010. I am very thankful to all the donors, volunteers and others who helped with these events.

I would like to inform you that as my one-year term has ended, Dr. Mahesh Maruvada has agreed to serve as the President of STHS. Mr. Ashok Nadkarni has served as the temple manager for the past few years and I am thankful to him for a job well done. Mr. Ananth Venkatraman has agreed to serve as the next temple-manager and I wish to thank Ananth for helping with this task. My congratulations and best wishes are to Dr. Maruvada, who, I am confident, will take STHS to the next level. Since the inception of our temple project, I have interacted with several individuals at various capacities and I wish to thank everyone for his/her support. Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the members of the Board of Trustees and Dr. Subba Rao Burra who started this temple project several years ago and asked me to get involved.

As I mentioned at the beginning, we have come a long way but still have a lot to accomplish. However, with God's grace our temple will grow in years to come.

Finally, I would like to remind our devotees to visit our website www.svtempletexas.org to find out about temple events, read Newsletters and to view the gallery of photos taken during our previous events at the temple.

Sincerely,
M.P.Sudhakaran
President, STHS

More About Adhika Maasam

In the last news letter we looked at "Adhika Maasam" (Extra Month). There is more to know about this. Auspicious activities are performed in all months except "Pushya", "Aashaadha" and "Adhika Maasa" in which no auspicious activities, are performed including weddings and not even "Pitru Karmas" (respectful offerings to our dead elderly).

To circle the Sun once, earth takes 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 45.51 seconds, but we count only 365 days in a year. The extra five hours, 48 minutes, and 45.51 seconds (almost a quarter day) is left. To compensate for the extra time, we have "leap year" every 4 years, February 29th. In Hindu calendar, as well, similar adjustment was made. According to "panchaangam", Chaandra Maana (according to moon) year has 354 days and "Nakshatra Maana" (according to stars) year has 366 days . Thus, between the two, there is a 12 day difference. To cover up the difference and equalize between the two "kaalamaanaas", pundits created Adhikamaasa. According to that, every 3 years, one Adhika Maasa comes. Because it is created out of necessity, it had no value through the ages. In fact in Adharvana Veda, Adhika Maasa was dubbed as "Anardha Daayakam"(meaningless). Hence, no rituals, weddings, auspicious or inauspicious activities.

In the month "Jyeshta Maasa" (during June and July), there are no major festivals, but a few to touch upon. One is "**Eruvaaka Punnami**"("Pournami of land tilling"), celebrated by farmers on "Purnima" in Jyeshta Maasa. On this day, earth, cattle and related agricultural equipment are worshipped. Belief is , by performing this, farmers will enjoy bumper crops. It is celebrated in various parts of India.

In Jyeshta Maasa, 13th day after Purnima, women perform "**Vata Saavitri Vratam**". On this day, married women, observe upavaasam (fasting), wear new clothes, go to river and worship Vata tree. Satee Saavitri was successful in obtaining her husband's "praana" (life) from Yama Dharma Raja. Married women perform this, praying for healthy long life of their husbands. (We will try to look for any such Vratam performed by husbands for their wives). It is not known as to how old this was but historical information indicates it was started more than 500 years ago in Nepal and Bihar. Centuries ago, in North India, in Mithila, this Vratam was popular. In 1816, in an agreement between King of Nepal and British East India company, Mithila was split between India and Nepal. Women who can not do Vata Saavitri fasting, observe fast on "Karva Chaut", that falls between Dussera and Diwaali. So much for festivals in Jyeshta Maasa.

Some of us are familiar about "**Pushkaraas**". Holy rivers get Pushkara once every twelve years. Some Pushkaraas are celebrated at a high level, hundreds of thousands of people attending. Bruhaspathi (Jupiter) spends one year in one Raasi(Judaic sign). Each raasi is connected to one river.

<u>Raasi in which Bruhaspati stays</u>	<u>River</u>
Mesham (Aries)	Ganga
Vrishabham (Taurus)	Narmada
Midhunam (Gemini)	Saraswati
Karkaatakam (Cancer)	Yamuna
Simham (Leo)	Godavari
Kanya(Virgo)	Krishna
Thula (Libra)	Kaaveri
Vrischikam (Scorpio)	Bheema
Dhanussu (Saggitarius)	Shona
Makaram (Capricorn)	Sindhu
Kumbham(Aquarius)	Praneeta
Meenam(Pices)	Pushkara Vaahini

दिवा पश्यति नौलूकः	divA paSyati nOIUkaH
काको नक्तम् नपश्यति	kAkO naktam napaSyati
विद्या विहीनो मूडस्तु	vidyA vihInO mUDastu
दिवा नक्तम् नपश्यति	divA naktam napaSyati
"Crow cannot see at night. Owl cannot see during day Stubborn, uneducated person cannot see during day or night".	

Importance of fasting

Upavaasa (fasting) is observed on different occasions, some times in form of "deeksha" (uncompromising and relentless observance of upavaasam). There are three great uses of upavaasa.

1. Self control on powerful basic desires
2. Better physical health
3. Cleansing of Ataman(soul).

Upavaasam is not a measure of devotion or piousness. It is not a business agreement with God to fulfill a long list of desires. It is to identify with God. It is between God and self. Physically fasting helps to cleanse the body of toxins and restore health. Some important Upavaasa Deekshaas--

Mahaa Shivaratri-- This is Lord Shiva's day, in Maagha maasa, fast all day and night, worship Shiva with Bilva Patras at "Lingodbhava" (Raising of Linga) time and stay awake all night chanting Shiva stuti.

Vata Saavitri--mentioned above.

Karva Chaut - In Kaartika Maasa, fourth day of second fortnight, this is celebrated by women praying for health and wealth of their husbands. That day they will not even drink water until they see moon, and pray Gouri Maata.

We found one that is observed by men for wife's happiness--

Rishi Panchami-- This is on 5th day of first fortnight in Bhaadrapada Maasa. Observed in devotion to Sapta Rishis (Seven Sages)who are considered as Brahma Kumaaraas. First, women started but later men started doing for their wife's happiness.

Janmaashtami -- On Sri Krishna's Birth day "Gokulaashtami", traditionally fast starts early morning before sunrise to midnight when Krishna was born. After resting Krishna in cradle, devotees end fast by eating sweet curd, paayasam, rice and puri.

Hartalika Teez --observed on third day of first fortnight of Bhaadra pada maasa. Women worship Shiva and Paarvathi for a happy and prosperous married life, and unmarried women for a good husband .

Ekaadasi--Eleventh day in both halves of a month is Ekaadasi --thus 24 per year. People pray Lord Vishnu and perform upavaasa Deeksha with belief that good things will happen. There can be difference in the way upavaasam is observed in different religions. But even in modern day several Indian women and men are observing this.

There is another rare Vratam called "Amaa Somavaara Vratam" not known to this generation. When certain thidhis and vaaras combine good things will happen. When amaavaasya thidhi comes on Monday, this vratam is observed. Usually God is at the center of worship for all vrataas, but Raavi(Ashwattha tree) is worshipped. It is believed that by performing this vratam, premature death is prevented and long life is granted.

मूलतो ब्रह्मरूपाय मध्यतो विष्णुरूपिणे mUlatO brahmarUpAya madhyatO viShNurUpinE

अग्रतश्शिवरूपाय वृक्षाजायते नमः agrataSSivarUpAya vRukShrAjAyatE namaH

"Root is the form of Brahma, trunk is the form of Vishnu, and the top is the form of Shiva. Salutations to the king of the trees"

Ashwattha Vruksh is trimoorthi Amsa. While chanting this sloka, one should go around tree 108 times and offer fruits and milk. One has to do it over 108 amaavaasya Mondays and do udayaapana (Closure). **Any one? Sign UP!**

Om Tat Sat