

शुभमस्तु
Subhamastu

अविघ्नमस्तु
Avighnamastu

विजयोस्तु
Vijayostu

आलय संदेशः



[Aalaya Sandeshaha] Sri Venkateswara Temple Newsletter

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Volume 8 August 2010

सर्वेशां नमः (Salutations to one and all.)

Thanks to all the devotees who participated in the Samuhika Sathyanarayana Puja conducted on Monday, August 23 and made it a successful event. My family could not attend this puja because recently we were blessed with a grand son and became 'grand parents'! As it was mentioned in the previous Newsletter, whenever there is a birth or death in the family, immediate family members are not to attend any event conducted at the temple for eleven days.

Recently Mrs. Shalini Narang joined the Board of Trustees and I am pleased to welcome her to the Board.

My sincere appeal to all devotees – Our temple is our religious home. This home has a lot of financial obligations. Big mortgage and other expenditures like we have with our homes, maintenance of acres of land with trees and grass. By God's grace, we have voluntary help from certain devotees, contributing big amounts in regular basis. Some are helping with money, as well as buying day to day supplies, lending donations, and offering physical service in maintaining the upkeep of the grounds and temple premises inside and outside. All of these people are immensely serving the temple in one way or other. However, the same people cannot contribute in cash or kind all the time. We need help. I want to know, as to what is keeping devotees away from participation and contribution. I welcome anyone to call me at 361-563-8208 and tell me about any concerns, reservations, objections, comments or suggestions that you may have.

When we request for sponsorship fees, they are only for those who are interested in performing the specified puja or homam etc. I do not want others to think that if they come to the temple at that time, they are obligated to that financial commitment in the least. I urge those to participate in Sanctum Sanctorum, witness the pujas, get teertha prasadam and God's blessings and donate in the hundi whatever your heart desires and capacity to donate allows. In addition, we need non-monetary help such as helping with food for special events and cleaning and upkeep of all the temple premises. We all know, "united we are strong" in every which way. For Sri Rama to build Vaaradhi, even the squirrels' help was a quality contribution, and they were blessed with

three stripes on their backs representing Lord Rama's fingers. I don't know if any one noticed, but only squirrels in India have these stripes, not the squirrels we see here. It may sound redundant, but all devotees, your religious home needs Help! Help! Help! Help! Help!

Sincerely,
Dr. Mahesh Maruvada
President, STHS

We are into festival season big time. With the beginning of Sravana Maasam, auspicious festival season starts. In Sravana Maasam, and in Bhadrpada Maasam we have festivals that are very auspicious and worth performing.

Sri Krishna Janmashtami

Sri Krishna Jayanthi on "Sravana Bahula Ashtami"(Wednesday Sept. 1st). "Ashtami tithi" is eighth day. Number eight is associated with Sri Krishna strongly. "Om Namo Narayanaya" mantra has eight syllables.

Krishnavataram is eighth of Dasavataras (ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu).

The birth place of Krishna, the jail had eight doors (so they said).

He is the eighth child for Devaki and Vasudeva.

Krishna's Dharma patnis (wives) are eight. They are Rukmini, Satyabhama, Jambavathi, Bhadra, Mitravinda, Kalindi, Naagnagiti, Lakshana.

The learned people give meaning of the word "Krishna" as the one who removes sorrows, gives wealth and the one who attracted the whole universe with his unmatched beauty and knowledge.

Devaki and Vasudeva were blessed to be parents of Lord Vishnu as per boon given to them in their previous life. Yasoda and Nanda were extremely fortunate to raise Krishna. They and people in Vraja enjoyed Krishna's childhood activities immensely. Sri Krishnavataram was meant to be *Poornavataram* (complete devine incarnation), full of happiness and protector of his devotees.

In Dwapara Yuga, many raakshasa dynasties were ruling and harassing people. In that situation, for *dushta sikshna*(punishing the evil) and *sishta raksana* (protecting the good) and *dharma samrakshana* (restoring the order of righteousness), Sri Maha Vihsnu took Krishnavataram. Maharishis and devatas followed Krishna as gopas and gopis, Adishesha became Krishna's older brother. Right from his birth, Krishna exhibited umpteen number of "Divya Leelas" (miraculous acts).

Krishna's birth occurred in Dwapara and Kaliyuga transition period, Subhakrut naama year, Sravana Maasa, when Sun is in Leo (Simha raasi), Kirshna Paksha, Ashtami tidhi, Rohini Nakshatram. His horoscope and planetary position is fabulous. Not only great horoscope but Krishna possessed an unmatched 32 Saamudrika qualities. Those who perform Krishnashtami Vratam get the benefit of "koti Ekadasi" (one crore Ekadasis) vratams.

Sri Ganesha Chaturdhi

शुक्लांबरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजं ।

प्रसन्न वदनं ध्यायेत् सर्व विघ्नोपशांतयेत् ॥

[SukIAMbaradharaM viShNuM SaSivarNaM caturBujaM |
prasanna vadanaM dhyAyEt sarva viGnOpaSAMtayEt ||]

Before starting anything, like performing puja, building house, entering new house, starting education, job, wedding etc, above sloka for Ganesh is chanted and Ganapati puja is performed. It is performed on “Bhadrapad Sukla Chavithi” (fourth day of first fortnight of Bhadrapada maasa.) It is also known as Vinaayaka Chaturdhi. Who is Ganapati? Ganapathi is Sabdha Swarupa—meaning it is equal to Om. (Omkaaram). Like all mantras start with Om, all auspicious activities are preceded by Ganesh puja. Ganesh has no beginning or ending. He is Anand moorti and siddhi devata giving all kinds of riches. Om started and evolved into elephant headed god.

Hence Ganapati is Omkaara Swarupam, according to “Ganapatya Dharwa seersham”.

ये प्रकृतादयो जडा जीवाश्च गण्यन्ते संख्यायन्ते।

तैशामीशः स्वामी पालको गणेशः॥

[yE prakRutAdayO jaDA jIvASca gaNyantE saMKyAyantE |
tESaMIsaH svAml pAlakO gaNESaH ||]

In universe, all the moving and non-moving creations are counted to exact number and being ruled by the one Ganapathi or Vinayaka

"अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान्" aNOraNIyAn mahatO mahIyAn

From atom to infinity, all pervading Paramaatma is Ganapati.

सर्वस्यात्मा सर्वगः सर्व शक्तिः sarvasyAtmA sarvagaH sarva SaktiH

सर्वव्यापी सर्वकर्ता परेशः ॥ sarvavyApl sarvakartA parESaH ||

सर्वद्रष्टा सर्व संहारकता sarvadraShTA sarva saMhArakatA

दाता पाता विश्वनेता पितापि ॥ dAtA pAtA viSvanEtA pitApi ||

This sloka describes the power and omnipresent nature of Gananaadha. He is Aadipurusha of Devataa ganaas and head of them, hence his names *Gananaadha*, *Ganesh*, *Ganapati*. Finally *Vinaayaka* means one who will suppress vighnas. He is the one who possesses kindness, brightness, education, knowledge, tactics, mastery, vevekam, vichakshana, and jovial nature.

Lord Ganapathy blesses and gives happiness to devotees quickly. He is “Sasyakaaraka” (in charge of agriculture). Hence, after puja, if his vigraham is placed in fields, crops will be excellent. He is “Adhishtaana devata (head devata). For “saphalatha Sakti” (force of giving fruitful results), he likes deepaaraadhana with coconut oil. He loves special foods like Kudumus, modaks, laddus, sugar cane, bananas, coconuts, vadas, etc.

There are many stories of the birth of Vinaayaka. In “Syvaagama,” the important part known as “Suprabhedaagamam,” Vinaayaka’s birth is like this:

अथात स्सं प्रवक्ष्यामि विघ्नेश स्थापनं वरं
अदौ त्वह मुमासाथं कीडार्थं हिमवद्दने
करणेश्व गजेट्रेण संभोग मकर रौततः
यद्रुच्छया तु तं द्रुष्ट्वा तदाकार मगा महम्
करेणो राकृतिं चोमा तदाक्रीड महं भृशं
तस्यां तु गर्भ मदधा तस्मिन्काले त्वदुद्भवः ॥

[athAta ssaM pravakShyAmi viGnESa sthApanaM varaM
adau tvaha mumAsAthaM kIDArthaM himavdvanE
karaNESca gajEMdrENa saMBOga makara rOttataH
yadrucCayA tu taM druShTvA tadAkAra magA maham
karENO rAkRutiM cOmA tadAkriDa mahaM BruSaM
tasYAM tu garBa madadhA tasminkAIE tvadudBavaH ||]

In the above sloka, Siva seems to be telling Vinaayaka: “Myself and Uma (Paarvati) were walking around in gardens in the Himalayas. We saw male and female elephants playing. After seeing that I became a male elephant and Paarvati a female elephant and we played. Then Parvati became pregnant and gave birth to Gajaanana.”

In Sivapuraana, Ganesha chapter, the story goes:

Once, Jaya and Vijaya saw Paarvati and told her that just as Siva has Naandi and Bhrungi, she should have someone to guard and serve. Then before bath, the flour paste she applied to her body is made into a doll and is given life. The doll is turned into a little boy and is asked to stand outside the door as a guard and not allow anybody in. When Siva ignored the little boy and tried to go in, the boy stopped Siva. Then Siva cut off the boy’s head for preventing him, went in and told Paarvati. When Paarvati was in sorrow, Siva sent people to go and get the head of the first life form they see sleeping with the head pointing north. They found an elephant and brought that head and joined it to the boy’s body and gave it life. From then, Vinaayaka became Gajaanana.

In “Linga Puraana,” it was written that Rakshasas and Asuras performed harsh penance and obtained many boons from Siva and tortured Devataas. Then, Devataas went to Siva and informed him of the atrocities they were facing from Raakshasas. Siva created Vighnesvara and appointed him to create vighnas(obstacles) to raakshasas’ penances and help devataas. Hence, Vighnadeva is *Kaarya Vighna karaka* (creator of obstacles for acts) for raakshasas and *kaarya vighna nivaaraka* (remover of obstacles for acts) for devathas.

He is “Vichitra Roopi” (unique and interesting form) and people worship him in different forms.

Usually he is seen with an elephant face, big belly, and has a little mouse as Vaahana. This form has significance related to farming in Bhaadrapada Maasam. Crops will be in full growth, hence worshipped as God of crops. Elephant face is the sign of Buddhi, mouse is the sign of tactics of mind and the belly is the storage vessel for crops. He made the mouse as vaahanam to conquer the mice that eat crops. The snake-like belt is a sign of stopping mice. Just as a mouse that is controlled cannot eat the crops, mind that is controlled by buddhi cannot misdirect your actions. During Ganapathi pooja we use leaves of jaaji, bilva, maachipatri, vishnuukraanta, tulasi, and raavi leaves, which have medicinal values, and are plants grown around fields. Ganapati had two wives named Siddhi and Buddhi. Siddhi had Laabha and Buddhi had Lakshya as sons. Buddhi (intellect) is necessary for Lakshya (goal), and Siddhi (successful effort) is necessary for Labdha (successful result).

In Amarakosam, Amarasimha gave different names of Gajaanana.

विनायको विघ्नराज द्वैमातुर गणाधिपाः
अप्येक दंत हेरंब लंबोदर गजाननाः

[vinAyakO viGnarAja dvaimAtura gaNAdhipAH
apyEka daMta hEraMba laMbOdara gajAnanAH]

Because we make Ganapati with soil, we need to submerge him in water. A Ganapati made of metal need not be submerged in water.

Mahaalaya paksha

Mahaalaya paksha (second fortnight of Bhaadrapada maasam from paadyami to amaavaasya) is important for annadaana, which is the best of all daanas. Annadaanam done in that paksha gives benefit of performing millions of yajnas. “Pitrudevatas” (ancestors in heaven) get the satisfaction of being fed. Karna did all daanas except annadana. When he went to heaven he got everything except annam (food). He realized his mistake, came back to earth, did Annadaana and attained mukti. Annadaanam is done in Mahalaya Paksha, daily in name of pitrudevataas. With that, not only parents, grandparents, and great grand parents, but Sri Maha Vishnu also receives the daana dharmas done in mahaalaya paksha.

*** Om Tat Sat ***