

शुभमस्तु  
Subhamastu

अविघ्नमस्तु  
Avighnamastu

विजयोस्तु  
Vijayostu



# आलय संदेशः

## [Aalaya Sandeshaha] Sri Venkateswara Temple Newsletter

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Volume 2 February 2010

Dear Devotees,

February is going to be a busy month with Sivarathri, Holi celebrations and the Festival of India/Health Fair event which has been scheduled for Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m to 3:00 p.m at the temple.

This Newsletter explains the legends associated with Sivarathri and Holi celebrations and I am confident that you will find the information useful and significant.

Preparations are underway for the Festival of India/Health Fair event and please obtain your "lunch tickets", if you have not already done so.

They can be obtained from any of the Trustees or by calling 361-888-5391 or 361-853-4138.

Finally, I would like to remind our devotees to visit our website [www.svtempletexas.org](http://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

योरुदो विश्वभ्वनाविवेश योरुदो विSvaBvanAvivESa

तस्मै रुद्राय नमो अस्तु tasmai rudrAya namO astu

- Yajurveda

Meaning—salutations to that Rudra who is filling the whole universe. He is Veda swaropa himself. He is possessor of music. Yajurveda also praised Rudra in infinite ways saying fire, water, air, medicinal greenery, the whole nature is Eshwara himself. This Eshwara tatva is

evident in Rudra Namaka mantras. The all pervading Eshvara is Lord Vishnu--(नमो भगवते वासु  
देवाय namO BagavatE vAsu dEvAya). There is no difference between Hari (Vishnu) and  
Hara (Eshvara)--( शिवाय विष्णु रूपाय SivAya viShNu rUpAya ) . Shiva is called Rudra  
because he both Ghora ( sorrowful) and Aghora (happiness).Knowing this fact is called Shiva  
tatvam. Hence, those who worship Shiva, both Ghora and Aghora merge into Shivam.

In kaliyuga, Sree Ramana Maharshi praised Shiva—

जगत ईश धीयुक्ता सेवानाम् jagata ISa dhlyuktA sEvAnAm  
अष्ट मूर्ति भृत् देव पूगानाम् aShTa mUrti BRut dEva pUgAnAm

--meaning Sarva, Bhava, Rudra, Ugra, Bheema, isaana, Mahadeva, Pasupati (all elements of  
nature—Earth, water, fire, air sky, Sun, Moon) are Eshvara.

### **Importance of Shivaratri**

Several legends are linked to MahaShivaratri. Here is a popular one. Once Brahma and Vishnu  
argued about who is the “Aadi Purusha” (First Godhead). The argument went on into using their  
powerful weapons on each other, leading to big disaster and impending total destruction. To stop  
this “Pralayam”, all Devatas went to Parameswara and pleaded “You are the only powerful  
savior”. Then the all pervading Siva said “Great People, Your concern is meaningful but in that  
worry you forgot a little thing-- ‘Without Shiva’s order even an ant can’t die’. Nevertheless, the  
casual factors Rajasa, Tamasa gunas have to be eliminated. Those are of Danava’s (Raakshasas)  
qualities but not of Devathas. Your worry will transform into happiness, this is my order”.

Then Maheswara decided to put his plan into action on Maagha Bahula Chaturdasi  
(fourteenth day of the second fortnight of the month of Maagha) and stood between Brahma and  
Vishnu as Jotirlinga (Pillar of light). Then he put them to a test, that is, they have to find the  
Jyotirlinga’s Aadi( beginning) and Antam(ending). Brahma became a Swan and flew to find  
'Antam' and Vishnu became a turtle and went into bottom of Ocean to find “Aadi”. MahaShiva  
is devoid of Aadi and Antam, hence they both lost. Vishnu conceded his defeat, but Brahma  
didn't want to concede. He decided to lie and declare himself as the winner and retain the  
authority (eventhough he is the head of Satya Loka-the abode of truth) and he took the help of  
“ketaki Pushpam” which was coming down, to be a witness. Sada Shiva, the Trinetra is aware of  
truth. He gave Judgment and ordered punishment to Brahma and Ketaki Pushpam. For Brahma,  
there won't be any temples, form, and prayers except the guru puja in Yagnas and Yagas. Ketaki  
Pushpam is forbidden for Pujas but is allowed to be his Shelter. After that, all Devatas including  
Brahma and Vishnu prayed ParamaShiva requesting to withdraw the Ugra roopam and return to  
his peaceful form. They all performed prayers—that is Maha Shivaratri.

Lingodbhava kaalam (the time of arising of Linga) is about at 11:30 pm. During this time  
devotees should be in front of Shiva with clear mind and utmost devotion, fasting all day,  
chanting Shiva Panchakshari Mantram and performing Lingaabishekam (bathing Linga) with  
milk, curd, honey, sugar and ghee. Laksha Bilvaarchana (archana with hundred thousand Bilva  
leaves) is specially beneficial. It is said that Vishnu is “alankara priya” (loves ornaments)

whereas Shiva is “abhisheka priya”(loves bathing). Lord Shiva is known as “Bhola Shankar” for he is easily pleased by devotees with simple devotion and prayers. To pray to Shiva, all you need is clear consciousness -- no need to know vedas and mantras!

There are other legends of Shivaratri that explain the popular custom of staying awake all night chanting the name of Lord Shiva. These also throw light on the greatness of Lord Shiva and his supremacy over all other gods and goddesses.

### **Marriage of Shiva & Shakti**

The story tells us how Lord Shiva got married a second time to Shakti, his divine consort. According to legend of Shiva and Shakti, the day Lord Shiva got married to Parvati is celebrated as Shivaratri—the night of Lord Shiva.

### **Samudra Mathanam**

This very popular legend from puranas explains why people stay awake all night on Shivaratri. Besides, it also tells us why Lord Shiva is also known as Nilakantha. Long story. In short, Indra enraged Durvasa muni who cursed Indra and all devatas to be bereft of all strength, energy and fortune. In battles that followed the incident, Devas were defeated by asuras (Demons) led by Bali and gained control over the Universe. Devas sought help of Vishnu who advised them to treat asuras in a diplomatic manner. Devas formed alliance with Asuras to jointly churn the ocean for he Nectar of immortality (Amrita) and to share it among them. Mount Mandhara was used as churning rod and Vasuki, the king serpents became the churning rope. All kinds of herbs were cast into the ocean and many great beings and objects were produced from the ocean and were divided between asuras and gods. It is said that the following things emerged from the Samudra Mathanam.

- **Sura or Varuni – goddess and creator of Wine**
- **Apsaras – various divine nymphs**
- **Kaustubha – a rare diamond said to be the most valuable Jewel in the Universe**
- **Uchhaishvara – the divine white horse**
- **Kalpa vriksha – the wish granting tree**
- **Kama dhenu – the wish fulfilling cow**
- **Airavata – the white elephant**
- **Lakshmi – the goddess of fortune and wealth. Vishnu and her were re-united after having been separated for many ages.**
- **Halaahala (Kalakuta) – the poison**
- **Dhanvantari – the divine physician** appeared with a pot of Amrita (nectar of immortality) in his hands in the end. Fierce fighting ensued between Devas and Asuras for the nectar. To protect the nectar from asuras, Devas hid the pot of nectar in four places on the earth – Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik. At each of these places, a drop of nectar spilled from the pot and since then it is believed that these places acquired

mystical powers. Maha Kumbha Mela is celebrated at those four places once every 12 years for this reason. Eventually, Lord Vishnu took the form of a beautiful woman Mohini while her beauty bewildered the asuras, Mohini seized the nectar and returned it to Devas who drank it immediately.

During the Sagara Mathanam, halahala (kalakuta) came out of the ocean and is so toxic that its effects would have wiped out the entire creation. On the advise of Lord Vishnu, gods approached Lord Shiva for help and protection as only he could swallow it without being affected. Out of compassion for living beings, Lord Shiva drank the poison and was able to keep it in his throat so that it is neither swallowed and nor exposed. The poison was so potent that it changed the color of Lord Mahadeva's neck to blue. For this reason Lord Shiva is also called Neela Kantha (blue necked ). As part of therapy gods were advised to keep Lord Shiva awake and the gods took turns performing various dances and playing music. As day broke out, Lord Shiva, pleased with their devotion, blessed them all.

Story of Lubdhaka and story of Ganga also relate to Shivaratri celebration. Ganga was brought down from heaven to earth and Lord Shiva had to contain the forceful Gana in his hair.

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## Holi

The colorful festival of Holi is celebrated on phalguni purnima which comes at the end of February or beginning of March. Holi festival has an ancient origin and celebrate the triumph of "good" over "evil". The colorful festival bridges the social gap and renews sweet relationships. On this day, people hug and wish each other " Happy Holi".

## Legend of Holi

The demon Hiranya Kasyap wanted to kill his son Prahlad in several ways. However, Lord Vishnu came and saved him every time. Finally he asked his sister, Holika to enter a blazing fire with Prahlad in her lap. Because he knew that Holika had a boon, whereby, she could enter the fire unscathed. Holika coaxed young Prahlad to sit in her lap and she herself took her seat in a blazing fire. Holika was not aware that the boon worked only when she entered the fire alone. Prahlad kept chanting the name of Lord Narayana all this while and came out unharmed. That is why it is celebrated as victory of good over evil.

The puja is performed in the afternoon. Before the puja one has to please a demon and dhundha. The following Sloka has to be chanted—

वन्दितासि सुरेन्द्रेण ब्रह्मण शम्करेण्च      vanditAsi surEndrENa brahmaNa SamkarENca  
अतस्त्वम् पाहिणो देवि भूतेभूतिप्रदा भवा      atastvam pAhiNO dEvi BUtEBUtipradA BavA

which means we are praying to drive away our fears and give us riches. This legend is of mythological significance. Mythology also states that Holi is the celebration of death of Putana who tried to kill infant Krishna. Another popular legend is of Lord Shiva and Kamadeva. Another legend is of Radha and Krishna. There are other cultural social and biological significance.

**You are cordially invited to the following events on  
Mahashivaratri on Thursday Feb 11, 2010**

**Saamuhika Abhishekam - 7 pm to 9 pm  
Prasad - 9 pm to 10 pm  
Bhajans - 10 pm to 11 pm  
Lingodbhava Abhishekam - 11.30 pm to 12.30 am  
Bhajans - 12.30 am to 1.30 am  
Ekavara Rudrabhishekam - 1.30 am to 2.30 am  
Bhajans - 2.30 am to 3.30 am  
Ekavara Rudrabhishekam - 3.30 am to 4.30 am  
Alankaar, Shiv Puja, Aarti and Prasad - 4.30 am to 6.00 am**

**Sponsorship: Saamuhika Abhishekam - \$51  
Lingodbhava Abhishekam - \$101  
Ekavara Rudrabhishekam - \$51 each  
All events - \$201**

**\*\*\*Om Tat Sat \*\*\*\***