

शुभमस्तु  
Subhamastu

अविघ्नमस्तु  
Avighnamastu

विजयोस्तु  
Vijayostu

आलय



संदेशः

[Aalaya Sandeshaha]  
Sri Venkateswara Temple Newsletter

10401 McKinzie Lane, Corpus Christi, TX 78410

Phone 361-241-0550 [www.svtempletexas.org](http://www.svtempletexas.org)

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Salutations to all,

This is my first newsletter as the new president of the Sri Venkateswara Temple. I will continue to do what I have been doing for the temple. In addition, I plan to embark on new ventures with the main goal of celebrating more events and increasing the participation of more devotees. I know that in our community there are many devotees that are not visiting the temple often. I would like to know if there is anything you want to make happen, and I appreciate your call and feedback.

We come from different parts of India with different practices of devotion to God. It would make good sense to accommodate the needs of devotees and to make use of temple services. The temple needs more devotees visiting and performing poojas and other religious activities. The bottom line is, the temple needs funds for sustenance and growth. There are times when we really scramble for enough money to pay bills. With help from all of you, such an embarrassing situation can be completely avoided. My sincere appeal to every one of you is to support the temple and be blessed.

We plan to publish a calendar for special events in the next three months to make you aware of the schedule so that you can make necessary adjustments and participate in the events. Furthermore, I will try to identify more special events for the rest of the year. Our efforts and goals will attain fruition with strong support from one and all.

I thank Dr. M.P. Sudhakaran for helping me out for newsletter and email. Be on the look out for the auspicious pooja on the evening of 23rd of August. Finally, if you need any information or assistance with an activity/project to be conducted at the temple, please feel free to contact me directly at 361-563-8208.

God Bless,

Mahesh Maruvada

During Ashadha Maasa, most of July, not many events happen. Summer vacations make this month probably the weakest month for the temple. However, we will enter Sraavana Maasa soon, and many events will take place at the temple. Among Maasas, **Sraavana Maasa** (most of August) is very auspicious. Marriages, *vratas* (promised, focused rituals) take place in abundance. Everyone waits for Aashaadha Maasa to be over with, especially newlyweds, because they are separated for one month-- sorry, they were, not anymore. Mangala Gowri Vratam, Naaga Panchami, Varalakshmi Vratam, and Raakhi Pournami (Sraavana Pournami) stand as pillars for our Sanaatana Dharma and traditions.

**Mangala Gowri Vratam** – This vratam is performed by women for their husband’s health, welfare, and prosperity. In the past, a pious woman, Suseela, brought her short- life- span husband to life by performing this vrata. It is performed on Tuesdays in Sraavana maasam. At the end of the vratam, women offer one thread to Gowri Devi and wear one on their right wrist or on their neck. Chanting:

मंगळे मंगळाधारे      maMgaLE maMgaLAdhArE

मांगल्ये मंगळप्रदे      mAMgalyE maMgaLapradE

मंगळाधारं मंजलेशि      maMgaLAdhAraM maMjalESi

मांगळ्यं देहिमे सदा      mAMgaLyam dEhimE sadA

(The gist of which is requesting auspiciousness from Gowri maata)

Then they pick black sediment from the bright deepam with an iron skillet and put that as kajal in their eyes.

**Naaga Panchami Vratam**- in Sraavana Maasam, on first panchami (Sunday) before Pournami, women dress up auspiciously and take pooja materials to the snake’s abode and worship naagadevatha. This is not to be confused with Naagula Chaviti performed on the 4<sup>th</sup> day after Diwali. Sraavana Maasam in India is a spectacle. Women go around in sparkling saris, lavish ornaments, and go shopping to buy things to be ready for Vara Lakshmi Vratam. Young and older women alike wear “toram” (yellow thread with flowers tied) on their right hand or on their neck. They all look like Lakshmi Devi herself.

**Vara Lakshmi Vratam**- Celebrated on Friday before Pournami in Sukla Paksha (first fortnight). There are many stories in the Puraanas illustrating this. According to Skanda Puraanam, Paarvati asked Shiva to inform her about a vratam that can be performed by women to attain Ashtaiswaryas (eight wealths) and putra poutras (children and grand children). Shiva described Vara Lakshmi Vratam, worshipping Srilakshmi, wife of Sri Maha Vishnu. Women also pray for health, prosperity and to be a sumangali (husband to outlive her). Ashtalakshmi, who gives danam (wealth), bhoomi (land), vidya (education), preeti (pleasure), keerti (popularity), shanti (peace), tishti (satisfaction), and pushti (prosperity), is worshipped in the form of Varalakshmi.

In a specific elaborate way, Kalasam is placed on which coconut smeared with haldi and kumkuma tilakam, with the nose and ears made of haldi, and beautiful eyes marked with kajal. Ornaments are placed over the head and face, and it is wrapped in a new cloth. A standard pooja is performed. Regardless of caste or creed, all women perform this vratam and are blessed by Lakshmi.

**Raakhi Pournami-** Pournami in Sraavana Maasam is very important. On this day, Lakshmi Devi is worshipped and is shining with 16 kalas. On this day, Raakhi festival is observed. Brothers and sisters express love and affection towards each other for the joy of their parents. Sisters tie raakhi to their brothers and get gifts. In Maharaashtra and Karnaataka, people go to the sea shore to offer coconuts. Hence it is known as “naarikela Purnima” or “Naarlee Purnima” . Those who wear *yagnopaveetam* (sacred thread) discard the old one and wear a new one, hence **Jandhyaala Pournami**. Another importance to this day is “**Hayagreeva Jayanthi.**” Hayagreeva has human body and horse head, has 4 arms wearing what Sri Mahaa Vishnu wears . Two raakshasas named Madhu and Kaitabha stole the vedas and hid in the bottom of sea. Sri Vishnu attained Hayagreeva rupa, went under the sea, killed the Raakshasas and retrieved the Vedas. Hence Hayagreeva is worshipped as Vidya, Jnanadaata (Blesser of knowledge). On this day, in Brindaavanam, celebrations of Raasaleela of Radha and Krishna are spectacular. With Radha and 16,000 gopikas, on the banks of Yamuna River, little Krishna performed ‘Raasa leela’ dances. Through Raasa leela, Krishna showed the meaning of the relation of *Aatma* and *Paramatma*. Using Brindavana as Stage, and using “yoga maaya” he created one Krishna for each Gopika and gave them the impression that “Krishna is Mine “ and let them feel enjoyment and fulfillment of their union with Krishna. That resulted in the removal of their *ego* which gave them the feeling that “Krishna is mine” and unite them with the permanent *Paratatvam*. Vaishnava Bhaktas—Jayadeva, Suradas, Swami Hari Das, Govinda Swami, passed on the “Taatvika Saaram” (essence of Tatva) narrated by Krishna Paramaatma in the form of beautiful, easily chantable poems.

### Story of Raakhi

Devataas lost to Raakshasas. In helpless situation, Indra’s wife Satchee Devi tied a ‘Tayetu’ (thread with a purified cylindrical object in the middle) to Indra, upon the advice of Brihaspathi. Indra fought ferociously and got victory for Devas. Later, Raaja Putra warriors gave importance to this. Later it moved beyond war situations to social situation and became a tradition of sister tying to brother. It started with a simple thread and now evolved into colorful glittering with elaborate designs made with even, silver and gold. Mantra chanted while tying Raakhi—

येन बद्धो बले राजा	yEna baddhO balE rAjA
दानवेन्द्रो महाबलः	dAnavEndrO mahAbalaH
तेन वामाभिः बध्नामि	tEna vAmABiH bdhnAmi
रक्षा माचल माचल	rakShA mAcala mAcala

Meaning—I am tying you with Vishnu Sakti that tied down the extremely powerful king of Daanavaas(Raakshasas). Oh! Rakshaa Bandhan! Do not waver at all.

In Sravana Maasa, on all Mondays, Lord Shiva, Paarvati, Kumaara Swami and Nandeewara are worshipped. On Sravana Pournami performing Satya Naarayana Vratam is a tradition. Every month on Ekaadasi and Pournami, this Vratam can be performed. Sravana Pournami is special for Satya Narayana Vratam. On this day, the moon is bright with 16 ‘kala’s and dripping nector. Hence performing this vratam at the rising time of moon is special. For devotees of Shirdi Sai, Sraavana Pournami is very important. On this day Baba’s paadukas (foot wear) were installed under the tree where he first sat. Every year on this day Baba’s devotees touch his paaduka with

reverence while chanting the sloka

सदानिंब वृक्षस्य मूलादिवासात्

sadAniMba vRukShasya mUIAdivAsAt

सुधाश्राविणं तिक्तमप्रियन्तम्

sudhASrAviNaM tiktamapriyantam

तरुम् कल्पवृक्षादियन्कम् साधुयन्तम्

tarum kalpavRukShAdiyankam sAdhuyantam

नममीश्वरम् सद्गुरुम् सायि नाधम्

namamISvaram sadgurum sAyi nAdham

(gist is ---prostrating in front of the foot wear under the auspicious tree and salutations to the great Sai Naadham).

#### Note

People have asked me for clarification about an issue--performing Bhajans in Temple in respect of a departed soul. From knowledgeable saintly people, it is known that wherever the deities are installed on yantras according to Agama Sastras, for 11 days following the death of a person ( wherever the death may have happened) activities can be performed related to death in the Temple Sanctum Sanctorum.

#### List of Important Events

<b>Saturday August 7</b>	<b>Balaji Abhishekam at 9 am.</b>
<b>Saturday August 7</b>	<b>Sani Trayodsi Puja 11:30 am.</b>
<b>Sunday August 8</b>	<b>Masa Sivaratri (Mahanyasa Siva Abhishekam) at 9:00 am.</b>
<b>Friday August 13</b>	<b>Lakshmi Abhishekam at 10:00 am.</b>
<b>Saturday August 14</b>	<b>Subrahmanya Abhishekam at 10:00 am.</b>
<b>Thursday August 19</b>	<b>Sai Baba Abhishekam at 6:30 pm.</b>
<b>Friday August 20</b>	<b>Sri Varalakshmi Puja at 6:30 pm.</b>
<b>Sunday August 22</b>	<b>Balaji Abhishekam at 9:00 am.</b>
<b>Monday August 23</b>	<b>Hanuman Abhishekam at 6:30 pm.</b>
<b>Friday August 27</b>	<b>Sri Lakshmi Abhishekam at 10:00 am.</b>
<b>Friday August 27</b>	<b>Ganapati Abhishekam at 6:30 pm.</b>
<b>August Mondays—16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Siva Abhishekam at 6:00 pm.</b>
<b>Monday September 6</b>	<b>Siva Abhishekam at 6:00 pm.</b>

The sponsorship for the Sravan month is \$51 for each “Monday” pooja and for the Varalakshmi Vratam or \$251 for all.

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