

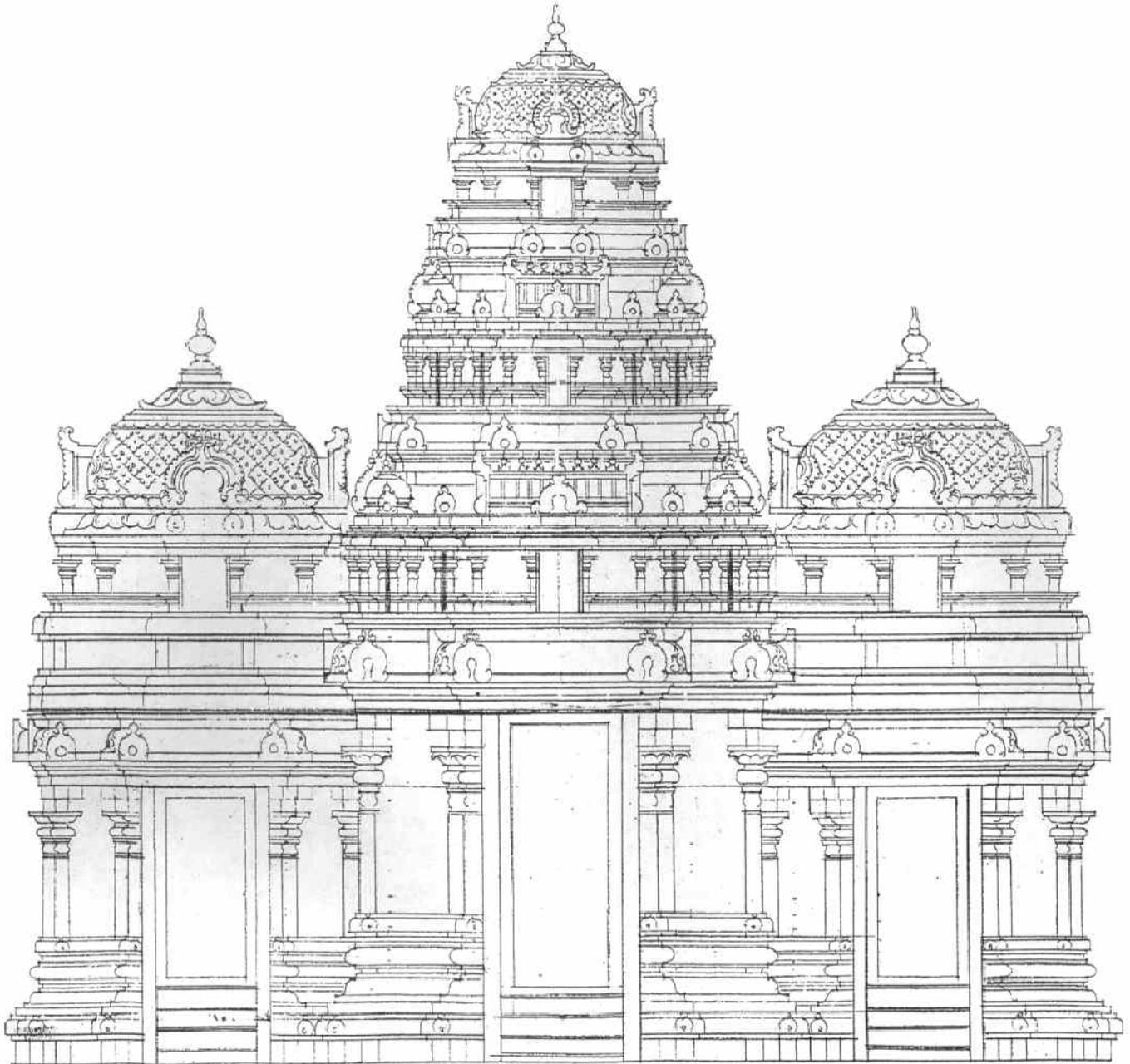
ॐ श्रीसत्यनारायणस्वामिने नमः



पादयात्र
Prayer Walk

at the Satyanarayana Temple
Middletown, Connecticut

SRI SATHYANARAYANA TEMPLE





पादयात्रा
PADAYATRA

Prayer Walk

**at the Satyanarayana Temple,
Middletown, Connecticut**

Dr. Sheenu Srinivasan

Periplus Line LLC

2005

This book is dedicated to
the second generation of Hindus in Connecticut.

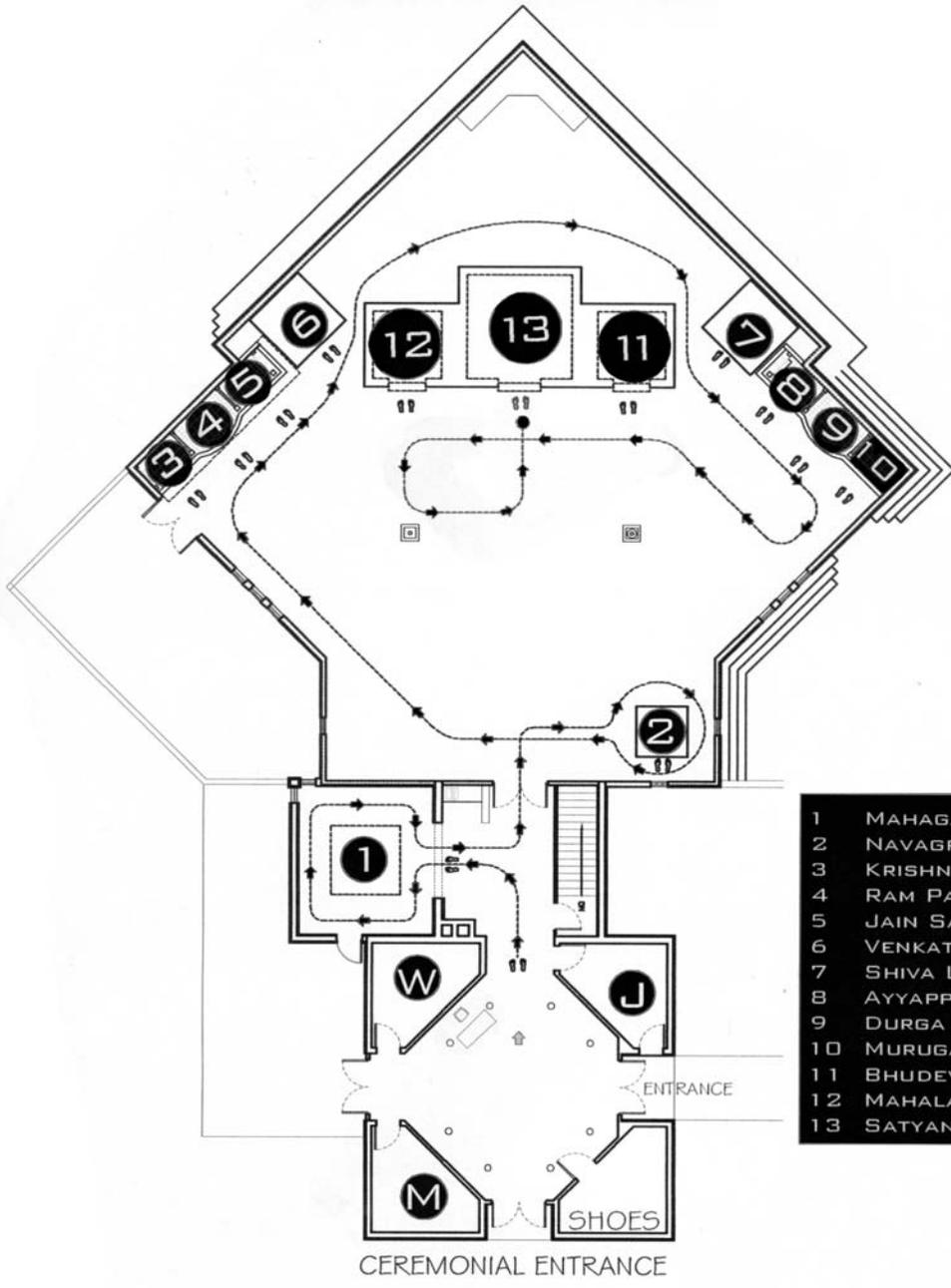
© A. V. Srinivasan

Published by Periplus Line LLC
Box 56, East Glastonbury, CT 06025
www.periplusbooks.com

First Edition
2005

Published by Periplus Line LLC and in behalf of
The Connecticut Valley Hindu temple Society, Inc.
11 Training Hill Road
Middletown, CT 06457

Kamla Srinivasan, Editor
Photos courtesy: Prasad Menon; Asha & Stephen Shipman
First Edition Sponsors: Drs. Mohan & Devika Kasarineni



- 1 MAHAGANAPATI
- 2 NAVAGRAHAS
- 3 KRISHNA
- 4 RAM PARIVAR
- 5 JAIN SANCTUM
- 6 VENKATESHWARA
- 7 SHIVA LINGA
- 8 AYYAPPA
- 9 DURGA DEVI
- 10 MURUGA
- 11 BHUDEVI / ANDAAL
- 12 MAHALAKHMI
- 13 SATYANARAYANA

↓
EAST.

PLAN FOR PRAYER WALK

Courtesy Barun Basu Associates



This walking prayer tour or guide to the shrines in the Satyanarayana Temple in Middletown, Connecticut, is addressed to Hindu worshippers, especially those of the second generation. They may choose to follow the suggested path (**refer to floor plan and the numbering**) in its entirety. It is also intended for the visitor who may wish to know more about the Temple and about aspects of Hindu worship.

To both we say: **सुस्वागतं** (suswaagataM) “A pleasant welcome!”

As you pause at each sanctum, you will see a photograph and suggested prayer shlokas. This is accompanied by an icon, a short description, and well known legends connected with the enshrined deity. Story-telling and listening to stories (puranas) and folklore concerning gods, sages and epic heroes form part of the total religious experience in Hinduism.

A few initial words on Temple protocol:

1. Please remove your shoes upon arrival at the reception area (Parbati Hall); they may be left in the Coat Room at the entrance.
2. No smoking is allowed; no drugs; no alcohol, no meat products (meat, fish, eggs, poultry, etc.) may be consumed or brought onto the Temple premises.
3. Please, no loud noise, beepers, or conversation in or near the sanctums.
4. Please turn your cell phones off before you begin the walk.
5. The prayer walk begins at the Ganapati sanctum and ends at the main sanctum of Satyanarayana or your ishtadevata (family deity).
6. Upon approaching each sanctum, the worshipper may recite the appropriate shlokas silently, especially if other people are present.
7. If a priest is in attendance at the shrine, he may or may not perform a ceremony of worship at this time, but if a puja is in progress, you may stay, participate, and receive the blessings and offering (prasadam). Otherwise, you may simply pray and/or observe and proceed to the next sanctum.
8. Worshippers may, where possible, circumambulate the shrine three times clockwise, keeping the deity to your right, and prostrate or bow before you leave the sanctum. Flowers and fruits may be offered or left in front, just outside the sanctum, before circling the shrine. Please do not touch the vigrahas (images).

Copies of *Prayer Walk* may be purchased with a prescribed donation.

[1] *

Mahaganapati



ओं श्रीमन्महागणाधिपतये नमः

*OM SreemanmahaagaNaadhipatayE namaH ***

I offer my salutations to Mahaganapati

* Numbering corresponds to numbering shown on the floor plan

** See the transliteration scheme towards the end of the book

वक्रतुंड महाकाय सूर्यकोटि समप्रभा
निर्विघ्नं कुरु मेदेव सर्व कार्येषु सर्वदा

*vakratuMDa mahaakaaya sooryakOTi samaprabhaa
nirvighnaM kuru mEdEva sarva kaaryEShu sarvadaa*

O Lord of the curved tusk, immense being,
blazing with the brilliance of a million suns,
please remove all obstacles in all my undertakings always.

Chant the several names of Mahaganapati:

ओं सुमुखाय नमः ऐकदंताय नमः कपिलाय नमः गजकर्णकाय नमः लंबोदराय नमः
विकटाय नमः विघ्नराजाय नमः विनायकाय नमः धूम्रकेतवे नमः गणाधिपाय नमः
फालचंद्राय नमः गजाननाय नमः वक्रतुंडाय नमः शूर्पकर्णाय नमः हेरंबाय नमः
स्कन्द पूर्वजाय नमः

*OM sumukhaaya namaH, EkadaMtaaya namaH, kapilaaya namaH,
gajakarNakaaya namaH, laMbOdaraaya namaH, vikaTaaya namaH,
viGnaraajaaya namaH, vinaayakaaya namaH, dhoomrakEtavE namaH,
gaNaadhipaaya namaH, phaalachaMdraaya namaH, gajaananaaya namaH,
vakratuMDaaya namaH, shoorpakarNaaya namaH, hEraMbaaya namaH,
skanda poorvajaaya namaH*

I salute that Lord: lovely in face; single-tusked; red in hue; elephant-eared,
generous-bellied; source of happiness; remover of obstacles; supreme; fire-like in
stature, leader of armies; crowned with the crescent moon; elephant-faced; with
curved tusk; quick to hear; powerful; Skanda's elder brother.

About Ganapati:

There is no Hindu who does not revere Ganapati, also known as Ganesha, Vighneshwara or, with special respect, Mahaganapati. Even those with little familiarity with Hinduism recognize the “elephant-headed” God. Among Hindus, irrespective of geography or most denominations, all auspicious events begin with the invocation of the Remover of Obstacles, seeking his blessings to proceed so that all may follow smoothly and without adverse incident. For example, Indian classical music concerts usually begin with a composition in praise of Mahaganapati. In the Hindu pantheon, Ganapati is the eldest son of Shiva and Parvati. His image has four hands, bearing a rope (to bind), an axe (to cut down or defend), and a modaka or sweet (prosperity); the fourth may carry the tusk used in transcribing the Mahabharata or is extended/lifted in blessing; his vehicle is a mouse (*musaka*). His festival, Ganesh Chaturthi, generally falls in September. Devotees make images of Ganapati in clay,

color them in gold, yellow, pink and red, worship them for ten days and at the end perform a *visarjan* by immersing them in water. Most Hindu households and businesses display his image or icon (picture). He is worshipped for *siddhi*, success in undertakings, and *buddhi*, intelligence.



Katha (Stories):

How did Ganesha get his elephant head? One day his mother Parvati (daughter of the Mountains) asked Ganapati to guard the entrance to her suite and admit no one while she took a bath. When her husband Shiva, one of the Hindu divine trinity, arrived and proceeded to enter, the son barred his way, following orders from his mother. No amount of persuasion or threats could sway the boy and a furious Shiva cut off Ganapati's head. The grief-stricken Parvati demanded that Shiva find a way to restore the life of her obedient son. Shiva immediately instructed his retinue to fetch the head of the first living being found asleep facing south. As it happened, the first creature found in this inauspicious chosen position was an elephant and its head was duly severed and brought to Shiva. Shiva in turn set the head on the body of Ganapati and, lo and behold, the boy came alive again as the handsome elephant-headed god.

Several interesting stories from Hindu mythology give us a glimpse of the importance of Ganapati. Another episode from the Shiva Purana pertains to a boon Shiva offered to grant to whichever of his two sons could travel the three worlds and return first. Ganapati's younger brother Skanda proceeded promptly to race through the universe while Ganapati, with folded hands and head bent in reverence, simply circumambulated Shiva and Parvati three times and declared, to their utter delight, that this circumambulation of his parents was in fact the equivalent of circling the three worlds! A pleased Shiva appointed Ganapati head of his army and thus the name Ganaadhipati came about.

The author of the epic Mahabharata, Veda Vyasa, needed a scribe to write down his poem as he recited it. On the advice of Brahma, he began by meditating on Ganapati. When Ganapati appeared he consented to assist as long as the poet agreed to recite the story without stopping. Vyasa countered by requiring that Ganapati must understand the meaning of each shloka composed before writing it down! This matching of wits produced the glorious epic Mahabharata, a poem of 100,000 2-line stanzas, longer than the Iliad and the Odyssey combined.

Navagrahas



ओं आदित्याय नमः ओं चंद्राय नमः ओं अंगारकाय नमः
ओं बुधाय नमः ओं बृहस्पतये नमः ओं शुक्राय नमः
ओं शनैश्चराय नमः ओं राहवे नमः ओं केतवे नमः

*OM aadityaaya namaH, OM chaMdraaya namaH, OM aMgaarakaaya
namaH, OM budhaaya namaH, OM bRuhaspatayE namaH, OM
shukraaya namaH, OM shanaiScharaaya namaH, OM RaahavE namaH,
OM kEtavE namaH*

Salutations to: Aditya (Sun); Chandra (Moon); Angaraka (Mars);
Budha (Mercury); Brhaspati (Jupiter); Shukra (Venus);
Shani (Saturn); Rahu; Ketu.

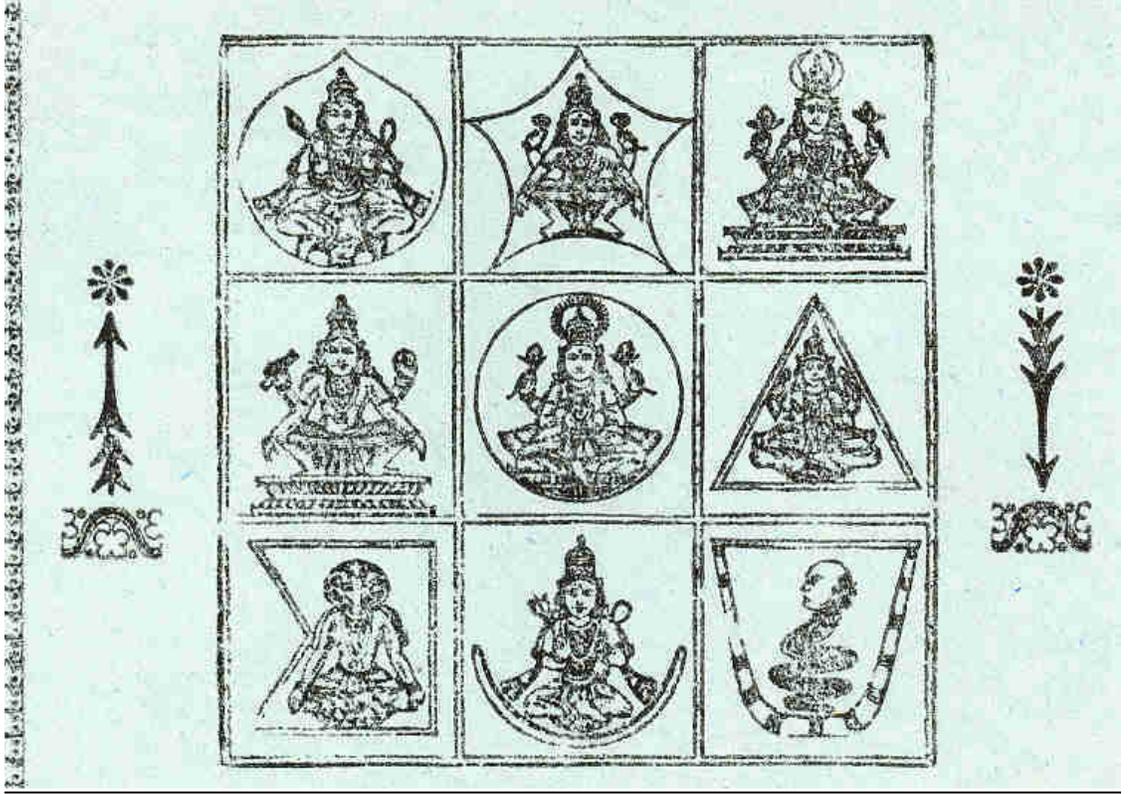
ब्रह्मा मुरारिस्त्रिपुरान्तकारि भानुश्शशी भूमि सुतो बुधश्च
गुरुश्च शुक्रः शनि राहु केतवह कुर्वतु सर्वे मम सुप्रभातम्

*brahmaa muraaristripuraantakaari, bhaanuSshashee, bhoomi sutO
budhashcha, guruScha shukraH shani raahu kEtavaha, kurvaMtu sarvE mama
suprabhaatam*

May Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara along with the heavenly bodies,
(Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu and Ketu)
grant this to be a good day for me.

About the Navagrahas:

The Navagrahas or Nine Planets, as they are popularly known to Hindus, are not all the nine planets of our solar system although some do belong there. They are the heavenly bodies most apparent in the sky, plus two demonic aspects as described in Vedic astrology (Jyotisha). Each has a shape, a color, a gemstone and a grain associated with it and often used in worship.



**Budha
Guru
Ketu**

**Shukra
Surya
Shani**

**Chandra
Angaaraka
Rahu**

While it is true that ancient Hindus focused inwards while trying to unravel the mysteries of the self or life on this earth, they also turned their attention to the study of the cosmos. Ancient Hindus believed that the life of each human was, to some extent, influenced by the position and movement of planets and other cosmic bodies at the precise moment of birth. The horoscope or diagram drawn up at birth was and often still is seen as a basic guide to future trends and general character, and is often consulted at the time of prospective ventures or betrothals.

Nature--water, fire, earth, wind, trees, flowers, mountain, the seasons, food crops--form an important aspect of Vedic ritual and prayer. The invocation of sacred rivers, fire-making, and references to the year, month, day, season, position of the sun and phase of the moon are all integrated into specification of time and space during sacred ceremonies. It is in this context that the nine grahas (planets, heavenly bodies), the Navagrahas, are included as an essential part of all major worships. Every major step in the celebration of life, beginning with the naming of a child, through the first haircut, the first day of school, thread ceremony (religious confirmation), puberty rites, marriage, housewarming, even the start of a venture, include a ceremony of worship directed to the Navagrahas. Navagraha puja is an integral part of Satyanarayana Puja.

Clearly there was an appreciation that life on this earth is impossible without that unflinching and ever marvelous rising and setting of the Sun. Further, the ancients noted that changes in the moods of the oceans were directed by the gravitational pull of the Moon and the interdependent orbits of the rest of the solar system. The worship of these celestial bodies establishes the time/space locus, the sacred space and time frame in which you stand and where you have chosen to invite the deity of your choice to bring you particular blessings. Surya (Sun), Chandra (Moon) and the planets Angaraka (Mars), Budha (Mercury), Guru (Jupiter), Shukra (Venus) and Shani (Saturn), along with the demonic aspects Rahu (Caput Draconis; eclipse) and Ketu (Cauda Draconis; comet) are arranged in a special order of relationship as seen here. Circumambulate, beginning and ending with the Sun, and moving clockwise as you recite the following:

रविः

जपाकुसुम संकाशं काश्यपेयं महाद्युतिं
तमोरिं सर्वपापघ्नं प्रणतोस्मि दिवाकरं

Ravi

*japaakusuma saMkaashaM kaashyapEyaM mahaadyutiM
tamOriM sarvapaapaghnaM praNatOsmi divaakaraM*

I offer salutations to Divaakara, Sun God shining like the japaa flower, the descendent of Kaashyapa, of great brilliance, destroyer of all sins and enemy of darkness.

चंद्रः

दधि शंख तुशाराभं क्षीरोदारुणव संभवं
नमामि शशिनं सोमं शंभोर्मुकुट भूषणं

Chandra

*dadhi shaMkha tushaaraabhaM kSheerOdaarNava saMbhavaM
namaami shashinaM sOmaM shaMbOrmukuTa bhUShaNaM*

I offer salutations to Chandra, also called Shashi and Soma, the Moon shining like curds or a conch shell, who rose from the Ocean of Milk and who adorns the head of Shiva.

कुजः

धरणीगर्भसंभूतं विद्युत्कांति समप्रभं
कुमारं शक्तिहस्तं च मंगळं प्रणमाम्यहं

Kuja

*dharaNIgarbhasaMbhUtaM vidyutkaaMti samaprabhaM
kumaaraM shaktihastaM cha maMgaLaM praNamaamyahaM*

I offer my salutations to Mangala, progeny of Mother Earth, whose brilliance matches that of lightning; youth armed with a spear.

बुधः

प्रियंगु कलिकाश्यामं रूपेणाप्रतिमं बुधं
सौम्यं सौम्यगुणोपेतं तं बुधं प्रणमाम्यहं

Budha

*priyaMgu kalikaashyaamaM rUpENaapratimaM budhaM
souMmyaM souMmyaguNOpEtaM taM budhaM praNamaamyahaM*

I offer my salutations to dear and gentle Budha, of dark complexion, and of unsurpassed beauty.

गुरुः

देवानांच ऋषीणांच गुरुं कांचन सन्निभं
बुद्धिभूतं त्रिलोकेशं तं नमामि बृहस्पतिं

Guru

*dEvaanaaMcha RuSheeNaamcha guruM kaaMchana sannibhaM
buddhibhUtaM trilOkEshaM taM namaami bRuhaspatiM*

My salutations to Brhaspati, teacher of gods and sages, the very embodiment of wisdom and Lord of the three worlds.

शुक्रः

हिमकुंद मृणालाभं दैत्यानं परमंगुरुं
सर्वशास्त्र प्रवक्तारं भार्गवं प्रणमाम्यहं

Sukra

*himakuMda mRuNaalaabhaM daityaanaM paramaMguruM
sarwashastra pravaktaaraM bhaargavaM praNamaamyahaM*

Salutations to Shukracharya glowing like the jasmine flower, the ultimate preceptor of the asuraas, and promoter of all learning.

शनिः

नीलांजन समाभासं रविपुत्रं यमाग्रजं
छाया मार्तांड संभूतं तं शनिं प्रणमाम्यहं

Shani

*neelaaMjana samaabhaasaM raviputraM yamaagrajaM
Chaayaa maartaamDa saMbhUtaM taM shaniM praNamaamyahaM*

I offer my salutations to Shani, dark in appearance, son of the Sun God and of Chaayaa, brother of Yama.

राहुः
अर्धकायं महावीर्यं चंद्रादित्य विमर्धनं
सिंहिका गर्भ संभूतं तं राहुं प्रणमाम्यहं

Raahu
ardhakaayaM mahaavIryaM chaMdraaditya vimardhanaM
siMhikaa garbha saMbhUtaM taM raahuM praNamaamyahaM

My salutations to Simhika's progeny, the brave Rahu, with only half a body, who eclipses both the Moon and the Sun.

केतुः
पलाश पुष्प संकाशं तारका ग्रह मस्तकं
रौद्रं रौद्रात्मकं घोरं तं केतुम् प्रणमाम्यहं

Ketu
palaasha puShpa saMkaashaM taaraka graha mastakaM
roudraM roudraatmakaM ghOraM taM kEtum praNamaamyahaM

Salutations to the terrifying Ketu, who resembles the palaasha flower, who leads the stars and planets.

Krishna



ओं श्री गोपालकृष्ण परब्रह्मणे नमः

OM Sree gOpaalakRuShNa parabrahmaNE namaH
Salutations to the supreme Lord Gopaala Krishna

हे गोपालक हे कृपाजलनिधे हे सिंधुकन्यापते
हे कंसांतक हे गर्जेद्र करुणा पारीण हे माधव
हे रामानुज हे जगत्रयगुरो हे पुंडरीकाक्षमां
हे गोपीजननाथ पालयपरम्
जानामि न त्वां विना

*hE gopaalaka hE kRupaajalanidhE hE siMdhukanyaapatE
hE kaMsaaMtaka hE gajEMdra karuNaa paareeNa hE maadhava
hE raamaanuja hE jagatrayagurO hE puMDareekaakShamaaM
hE gopIjananaatha paalayaparam
jaanaami na twaaM vinaa*

O Lord, protector of cattle; sea of compassion; consort of Mahalakshmi, daughter of the Ocean of Milk; slayer of Kamsa; bestower of endless mercy upon the elephant chief in his distress; Maadhava known through contemplation; younger brother of Balarama; Lord of the three worlds; lotus-eyed one; protector of the gopis:
Protect me, for I know not anyone but you.

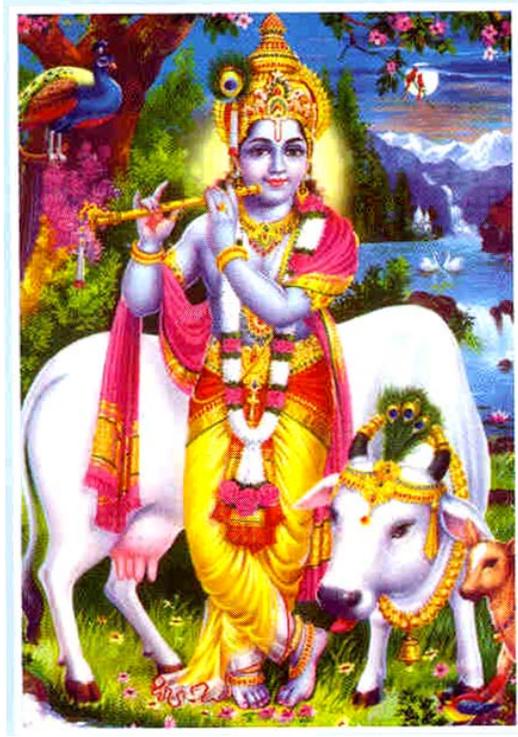
Chant the several names of Krishna:

ओं श्रीकृष्णाय नमः वासुदेवाय नमः देवकीनंदनाय नमः
पूतना जीवित हराय नमः गोविंदाय नमः गोपालाय नमः मथुरानाथाय नमः
कंसारिये नमः जगद्गुरुवे नमः पार्थसारथ्याय नमः

*OM SrIkRuShNaaya namaH, vaasudEvaaya namaH, dEvakInaMdanaaya
namaH, pootanaa jeevita haraaya namaH, gOviMdaaya namaH, gOpaalaaya
namaH, mathuraanaathaaya namaH, kaMsaariyE namaH, jagadguruve
namaH, paarthasaarathyaaya namaH*

Salutations to SriKrishna; Vasudeva; the beloved son of Devaki; who sucked out the life of Pootana; Govinda; Gopala; Lord of Mathura; foe of Kamsa; Lord of the Universe; Arjuna's charioteer.

Krishna, along with his consort Radha, is shown here in white marble, the material often used in North India to sculpt deities. A common representation shown below depicts Krishna as a cowherd in a delightful mood playing on his flute in a pleasant meadow with a cow and her calf nearby.



About Krishna:

If there is one god whose name is known and recognized throughout the world, it is Sri Krishna. Hindus recognize him as the personal savior and protector of those who seek and surrender to him. Students of the Bhagavadgita know him as the charioteer, friend and mentor of Arjuna. Readers of the epic Mahabharata know him as the pivot around which hundreds of conflicts were resolved through his guidance and intervention. The most notable example of his power was the spectacular saving of Draupadi's honor at the court of King Dhritarashtra. For his bhaktas (devotees) Krishna is a delight with his playful pranks as a child. A well known song celebrates the episode in which Krishna's foster mother scolds him for eating mud and asks him to open his mouth. He does so, revealing the three worlds to the astonished Yashoda. There are also the many escapades with the gopis and Radha as the young lover and cowherd (Gopala). But most of all it is Lord Krishna's promise to humanity made in the third of the four yugas, Dwaaparayuga, that has sustained the Hindu belief in the Supreme Being over thousands of years.

He promised:

यदा यदाहि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं श्रिजाम्यहं

*yadaa yadaahi dharmasya glaanirbhavati bhaarata
abhyutthaanamadharmasya tadaatmaanaM shrijaamyahaM (B.G. 4-7)*

Whenever there is decline of dharma, O descendent of Bharata, I shall manifest myself in order to restore the balance.

In Chapter 2 of the Bhagavad Gita, verse 11, Krishna strikes the keynote:

अशोच्यान् अन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्जावादांश्च भाशसे
ashOchyAn anvashOchstvaM prajnAvAdAMScha bhAshasE (B.G. 2-11)

Simply put: “Do not grieve.” According to Swami Venkateshananda, this verse may be used as a mantra (See *The Song of God* by Swami Venkatesananda, The Chiltern Yoga Trust, 1972).

At moments of weakness and doubt, the believer may recall Krishna’s charge to Arjuna when the latter hesitated on the battlefield of Kurukshetra and could not find the will to fight the righteous battle against the family patriarchs, his guru and his cousins:

क्लैब्यं मास्मगमः फार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते
क्षुद्रम् हृदय दौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परंतप

klaibyaM maasmagamaH PArtha naitattvayyupapadyatE
kShudram hRudaya dourbalyaM tyaktvOttishTha paraMtapā (B.G. 2-3)

“Yield not to doubt, O Arjuna, it does not befit you;
cast off this mean weakness of heart. Stand up.”

Arjuna’ response:

करिष्ये वचनं तव

karishyE vachanaM tava

I shall perform (my duty) according to your wish.

[4]

Ram Parivar



ओं श्री सीता लक्ष्मण भरत शत्रुघ्न हनुमत्समेत श्रीरामचंद्र परब्रह्मणे नमः

*OM Sree seetaa lakshmaNa bharata shatrughna
hanumatsamEta SrIraamachaMdra parabrahmaNE namaH*

I offer my salutations to the Supreme Being SreeRamachandra in the company of Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Shatrughna and Hanumaan

कौसल्या सुप्रजा रामा पूर्वा संध्या प्रवर्तते
उत्तिष्ठ नरशार्दूल कर्तव्यं दैवमान्हिकं

*kausalyaa suprajaa Raamaa poorvaa saMdhyaa pravartatE
uttishTha narshaardUla kartavyaM daivamaanhikaM*

O Rama, Kausalya's auspicious child, behold the dawn appearing in the east!
O Tiger among men! Arise in order to perform the daily rites.

Chant the several names of Ramachandra:

ओं रामाय नमः रामभद्राय नमः रामचंद्राय नमः
जातवेधसे नमः रघुनाथाय नमः सीतापतये नमः

*OM raamaaya namaH, raamabhadraaya namaH, raamachamdraaya namaH,
jaatavEdhasE namaH, raghunaathaaya namaH, sItaapatayE namaH*

Salutations to Rama, salutations to the haven of safety, salutations to the moon of
delight, salutations to the all-knowing, salutations to the Lord of the Raghu clan,
salutations to the husband of Sita!

The Ram Parivar icon you see here shows Rama accompanied by his beloved wife Sita, his
faithful brother Lakshmana and their devoted follower Anjaneya, or Hanuman, the monkey
king. The bows held by the brothers denote their status as warriors and princes of the dynasty of
Raghu.



The Ramayana:

Hindus celebrate Rama or Ramachandra during Sriramanavami for nine days in April each year during which it is customary, especially in the South, to read Valmiki's version of the Sanskrit epic, the Ramayana. On the ninth day (*Navami thithi*), the details of the coronation (*pattaabhishekham*) are sung and the entire festivity reaches a climax. Harikathas (religious story recitals) are arranged in which skillful storytellers relate in the local language the nearly infinite sub-stories (*upakathaas*) which bring us back and forth to the main story.

The beloved Sriramachandra is the hero of the Ramayana which recalls the trials, tribulations and triumphs of the young prince of Ayodhya, avatar of Vishnu. As a story, the Ramayana is superb. Each chapter provides insight into the depths of human feeling and the eternal conflict between human values and human nature.

Dasharatha's sorrow, the exceptional bond of brotherly love between Rama and Lakshmana, Sita's unconditional devotion to her husband, the unswerving loyalty of yet another brother, Bharata, and of Hanuman, Rama's supreme sense of duty and justice, Manthara's treachery, Keikeyi's jealousy and greed, all interplay throughout the unfolding drama and guide us towards a life within the framework of dharma.

It is the practice among Hindus to bless boys to grow up to be like Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Hanuman, good and brave souls, and bless girls to grow up to be like Sita full of love and strength. The power of the epic Ramayana is such that it has for thousands of years influenced the lives of Hindus around the world and will undoubtedly do so for another thousand years and more, in keeping with the promise made by Brahma to the author of the Ramayana, Valmiki:

यावत् तस्यन्ति गिरियाः सरीतश्च महीतले
तावत् रामयण कथा लोकेषु प्रचरिष्यति

*yaavat tasyanti giriyaH sareetashcha maheetalE
taavat rAmayaNa kathaa lOkEshu pracharishyati*

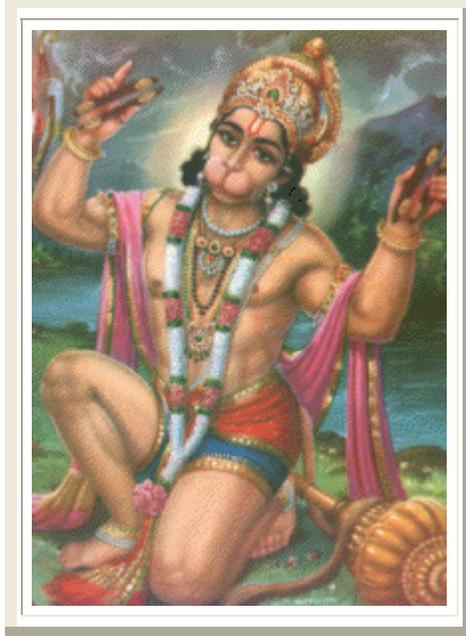
“As long as the mountains stand and the rivers flow
so long shall the story of Rama be cherished among people.”

Hanuman

बुद्धिर्बलं यशो धैर्यं निर्भयत्वं अरोगता
अजाड्यं वाक्पटुत्वं च हनूमत्स्मरणाद्भवेत्

*buddhirbalaM yashO dhairyaM nirbhayatvaM arOgatA
ajADyaM vAkpaTutvaM cha hanUmatsmaraNAdbhavEt*

Upon remembering Hanuman, one acquires intelligence, strength, fame,
courage, fearlessness, good health, alertness and eloquence.



Jain Sanctum



Bhagwan Adinath

Bhagwan Mahavir

The Jain sanctum houses two of the most revered Tirthankars.*

Bhagwan Rishabhdev (Adinatha), the first Tirthankar started the Jaina Dharma in this cycle of time. He is considered to be the eighth Avatar of Bhagwan Vishnu in the Bhagvata Purana. Born to King Nabhi Rai (last of the Manus) and Maru Devi. (Bharat is named after his eldest son Bharat Chakarvarti.)

Bhagwan Mahavir (given name: Vardhman; popularly known as Sanmati, Nataputa, and Mahavir or the great warrior) 24th Tirthankar. Born in 599 B.C., left home at the age of 30, meditated for 12 years before obtaining enlightenment (Kevala Gyan—Omniscience) at the age of 42; preached for 30 years; Nirvana at the age of 72.

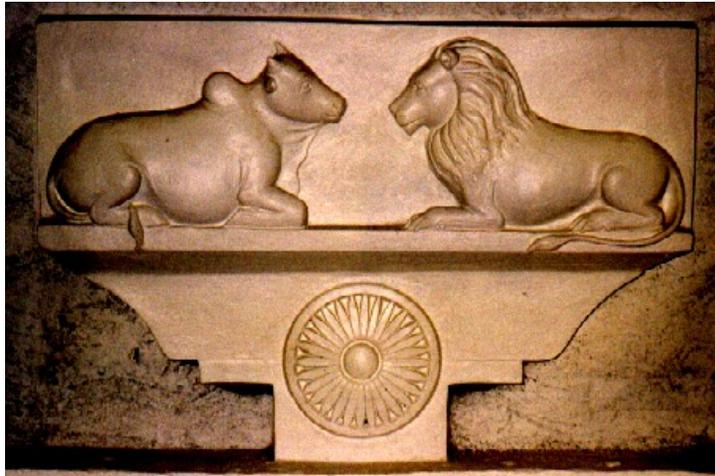
Namokar Mantra:

Namo Arhantanam; Namu Siddhanam, Namu Aiyrianam(Acharya), Namu Uvajjiyanam (Teachers), Namu Loya (Loka) Savva (all) Sahunam (Sadhus).

Mantra remembers the qualities of Arhats (persons who have attained Omniscience), Siddha (all who have attained Nirvana), Acharya (most learned among teachers), Upadhyas (all teachers who spread Dharma), and all Sadhus (Saints) of the world.

* The description of the Jain sanctum has been contributed by Dr. Faquir Jain.

The logo of bull & lion signifies coexistence of all Jivas under Ahimsa Dharma Chakra.



Ahimsa Parmo Dharma, Yato Dharmastato Jai

(Minimization of violence is the eternal religion, Triumph is there where religion is practiced)

[6]

Venkateshwara



ओं श्री वेंकटेश्वर स्वामिने नमः

OM Sree veMkaTEshwara swaaminE namaH

Salutations to Venkateshwara!

उत्तिश्टोत्तिश्ट गोविंद उत्तिश्ट गरुडध्वज
उत्तिश्ट कमालाकांत त्रैलोक्यम् मंगळं कुरु

*uttishTOttishTha gOviMda uttishTha garuDadhwaJa uttishTha
kamaalaakaAMta trailOkyam maMgaLaM kuru*

O Govinda, rise, rise, rise, O Lord of Lakshmi, with the flag of Garuda, and
bestow your grace on the three worlds!

विना वेंकटेश न नाथो न नाथः सदा वेंकटेश स्मरामि स्मरामि
हरे वेंकटेश प्रसीद प्रसीद प्रियं वेंकटेश प्रयच्छ प्रयच्छ

*vinaa veMkaTEsha na naathO na naathaH
sadaa veMkaTEsha smaraami smaraami
harE veMkaTEsha praseeda praseeda
priyaM veMkaTEsha prayacCha prayacCha*

There is no Lord other than Venkatesa; I shall forever remember Venkatesa who is
pleased to grant us his blessings.

Chant the several names of Venkateshwara:

ओं श्री वेंकटेशाय नमः श्रीनिवासाय नमः लक्ष्मीपतये नमः
गोविंदाय नमः जगन्मंगळदायाय नमः परब्रह्मणे नमः जगदीश्वराय नमः

*OM SrI vEMkaTEshaaya namaH, SrInivaasaaya namaH, lakSmeepatayE
namaH, gOviMdaaya namaH, jaganmaMgaLadaayaaya namaH,
parabrahmaNE namaH, jagadeeshwaraaya namaH*

Salutations to Venkatesa, Srinivasa, the Lord of Lakshmi, Govinda, bestower of
grace to the universe, the supreme Lord of the universe.

Venkateshwara, also known as Balaji and Srinivasa, is considered an incarnation of
Mahavishnu. He is venerated by all Hindus irrespective of any special affiliations. The very
name implies a unification of Vaishnavite and other beliefs. The original and most famous
shrine to Venkateshwara is at Tirupati on top of the Seshadri Hills in Andhra Pradesh.

The vigraha in front of you is the most familiar representation of Lord Venkateshwara sculpted in granite and adorned with the *naamam* (Vaishnavite symbol), *shankha* (conch) and *chakra* (discus).



Katha (Story):

The sage Brighu was once commissioned by a group of sages on the banks of the Ganges river to decide whom among the Trinity they should worship. As the story goes, Brighu visits Brahma only to be ignored, then he visits Shiva who gets annoyed because he was with Parvati at the time. Finally Brighu decides to visit Ksheerasagara (Ocean of Milk) where Mahavishnu, reclining on Adishesha at the time, did not get up to receive the sage. Totally outraged, Brighu kicks Vishnu's chest upon which the latter suddenly springs up and massages Brighu's foot, asking his forgiveness for the pain the kick caused! Meanwhile, Mahalakshmi, who normally resides in Vishnu's chest, flees at this ill treatment, leaving him alone. However Brighu is pleased by the right attitude of Vishnu and returns to the sages to report that it is Vishnu who should be worshipped.

Mahavishnu then goes in search of Lakshmi and learns that she has taken refuge in the Tirupati Hills, in present day Andhra Pradesh. Arriving there he finds only an anthill as shelter. When Brahma and Shiva learn of this predicament they take the form of a cow and calf and enter the herd of a local king. The cowherd notices that this particular cow cannot yield any milk at all at the end of the day. Upon observing the cow further, the cowherd sees it emptying its udder into the anthill thus nourishing Lord Vishnu! When his hideout is revealed, Vishnu goes up to the next hill and asks King Varaha to provide him shelter. Unable to pay rent, the Lord placates Varaha by telling him that no devotee will worship him before worshipping Varaha, a practice that is true to this day!

[7]

Shiva Linga



ओं श्री परमेश्वराय नमः

OM SrI paramEshwaraaya namaH

Om I salute Shiva Parameshwara!

सुरगुरु सुरवर पूजित लिंगं सुरवन पुष्प सदाचित लिंगं
परात्परं परमात्मक लिंगं तत्प्रणमामि सदाशिव लिंगं

*suraguru suravara poojita liMgaM suravana puShpa sadaarchita liMgaM
paraatparaM paramaatmaka liMgaM tatpraNamaami sadaashiva liMgaM*

I salute that supreme Lord Shivalinga, the Transcendent Being, worshipped by the multitude of gods and their preceptor with divine flowers from the celestial gardens.

Chant the several names of Shiva:

नमस्ते अस्तु भगवन् विश्वेश्वराय महादेवाय त्रयंबकाय
त्रिपुरांतकाय त्रिकालाग्निकालाय कालाग्नि रुद्राय
नीलकंठाय मृत्युंजयाय सर्वेश्वराय सदाशिवाय
श्रीमन्महादेवाय नमो नमः

*namastE astu bhagavan vishvEshwaraaya mahaadEvaaya trayaMbakaaya
tripuraaMtakaaya trikaalaagnikaalaaya kaalaagni rudraaya neelakaMThaaya
mRutyuMjayaaya sarvEshvaraaya sadaashivaaya SrImanmahaadEvaaya namO
namaH*

Salutations to the great Lord who is ruler of the universe;
Lord of Lords; three-eyed; destroyer of the three strongholds of the asuras;
controller of past, present and future and the final conflagration;
all-powerful master of the fire of time; blue-necked; conqueror of death.

About Shiva:

Shiva or Maheswara is one part of the Hindu Trinity which is composed also of the creator Brahma and the protector Mahaavishnu. Shiva maintains the cycle of life. When Hindus contemplate Shiva, the strongest impression in their minds is that of an embodiment of eternal calm and peace. He is forever in deep meditation in his abode, Kailaasa mountain in the great Himalayas.

The representation of Maheswara here is in the form of a phallus or lingam to help us contemplate the need to think of him as the most basic and essentially formless one. His vaahana (“vehicle” in context) is a bull which is seated right outside the sanctum facing the deity. Shiva is commonly portrayed as an ascetic with a serpent around his neck, *vibhooti* (sacred ash) adorning his face and his essentially bare body, a *trishul* (trident) in one of his hands, and a *kamandalu* (container of water for use in religious practices) in another hand, and a *damaruga* (small drum) in yet another hand. The power of Lord Shiva’s eternal penance or *tapascharya* is such that it is customary to invoke Shiva at the very beginning of any religious or spiritual endeavor so that any and all bad vibrations in the immediate vicinity of the worship or practice are eliminated by the mere utterance of his name.



Katha (Stories):

Many religious stories and dramas portray that all attempts to distract Shiva from his principal pursuit of an ascetic life always end up in disaster. Thus Kama, Lord of Desire, who tried such a distraction was burned badly when Shiva opened his third eye. On the other hand Shiva was all compassion when it came to saving the world from the serpent Vasuki's poison during the Amritamanthana (Churning of the Milky Ocean). Vasuki, used as a churning rope, was so tired and sick from the repeated back and forth action of churning that he vomited a most potent poison into the Ocean of Milk. Fearing the destruction of the world, Shiva immediately swallowed the poison. He himself would have succumbed were it not for the timely intervention of Parvati, his consort, who held Shiva's throat so tightly that she prevented entry of the poison into his body. It is said that the arrested poison turned the throat blue, thus the name Neelakanta, meaning blue-throated.

Hindus believe that the first sounds emerging from Shiva's damaruga as he danced the cosmic dance of creation (as Nataraja, Lord of Dance) led to Sanskrit sounds, and thus the origin of the language of the devas. Even now dancers trained in Indian dance perform Shiva Taandava Naatya (Shiva's Cosmic Dance) as a preferred item in their repertoire. Millions of devotees around the world worship Shiva on Shivratri night in February each year when the whole night is a time to worship Parameshwara, the Mahadeva.

[8]

Ayyappa



ओं श्री अय्यप्पस्वामिने शरणु
OM Sri ayyappaswaaminE sharaNu
I surrender to Swami Ayyappa

Chant the several names of Ayyappa:

ओं ऋग्वेद रूपाय नमः ओं विष्णुपुत्राय नमः
ओं खड्गपाणये नमः ओं व्याघ्रचर्म धाराय नमः
ओं हरहरि पुत्राय नमः ओं त्रिनेत्राय नमः

*OM RugvEda rUpaaya namaH, OM vishNuputraaya namaH,
OM KaDghapaaNayE namaH, OM vyaaghracharma dhaaraaya namaH,
OM harahari putraaya namaH, OM trinEtraaya namaH*

I salute Lord Ayyappa who is the very embodiment of Rig Veda; son of Vishnu; sword-wielder; tiger-skin clothed, son of Hari and Hara; who has three eyes.

Ayyappa is a popular deity for Hindus from Kerala in southern India. The original Ayyappa temple is the famed shrine on a hill at Sabarimalai (Sabari Hills) which attracts thousands of devotees on Makarasankranti in mid-January during the annual Makara Vilakku festival. The festival lasts forty days during which time worshippers practice abstinence, follow dietary restrictions and wear only black. The festival ends with a climb to the temple mount where the devotees ascend eighteen steps to enter the main sanctum. The deity you see here is an exact replica of the vighraha in Sabarimala Temple and is cast in panchaloha made at Changanasseri, Kerala.

Ayyappa is believed to be Hari-Hara-puthra, born as a consequence of the union between Mahavishnu (as Mohini) and Siva.



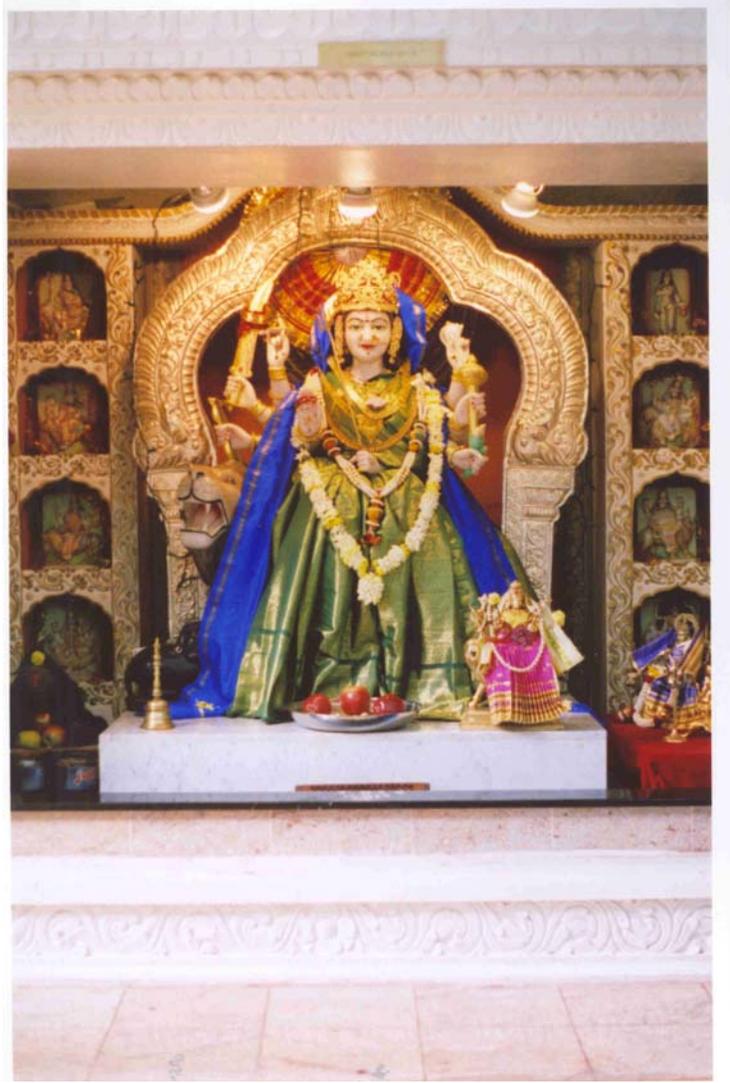
Katha (Stories):

Legend has it that Rajashekhara, king of Pandharam, went out on a hunting trip and found a baby on the bank of the holy Pamba river. The golden bell around the baby's neck was indicative of divinity or royalty and the overjoyed king named him Manikanta and considered him as his heir. Soon after, however, the queen gave birth to a son. As the children grew up, the queen became jealous and wanted her own child to ascend to the throne. But Manikanta was in the way.

One day the queen complained of an illness which she claimed could be cured only by tiger's milk. When Manikanta learned of this, he volunteered to get it for his stepmother from a nearby forest infested with tigers. In addition to the risk from tigers, Manikanta knew that the demon Mahishi lived there. Without any hesitation, he entered the forest, killed Mahishi and returned home riding a tigress. The queen fully appreciated the divine nature of Manikanta after this triumph, and especially when the prince helped install his younger brother on the throne and went to the Sabari Hills to become a yogi.

[9]

Durga Devi



ओं श्री दुर्गा देव्यै नमः

OM Sri durgaa dEvyai namaH

Salutations to Durga Devi

सर्व मंगळ मांगल्ये शिवे सर्वार्थ साधिके
शरण्ये त्र्यंबके देवि नारायणी नमोस्तुते

*sarva maMgaLa maaMgalyE shivE sarvaartha saadhikE
sharaNyE tryaMbakE dEvi naaraayaNI namOstutE*

Salutations to Naaraayani; embodiment of prosperity; personification of the Shiva aspect; accomplished; protector; Mother of the three worlds, and known as Gauri.

Chant the names of Durga as follows:

ओं त्रिनेत्रायै नमः त्रिशूलायै नमः चक्रिन्ये नमः
घोरायै नमः हरिहर प्रियायै नमः महिशाघ्न्यै नमः

*OM trinEtraayai namaH, trishUlaayai namaH, chakrinye namaH,
ghOraayai namaH, harihara priyaayai namaH, mahishaaghnyainamaH*

I salute Durgaa Devi; slayer of Mahisha; three-eyed and armed with a trident and discus; terrible; and yet loved by Hari and Hara.

About Durga:

Durga Devi is the goddess who signifies the shakti or dynamic aspect of godhead in all its implied awesomeness. The female form of godhead is generally recognized as a consort supportive of the Lord, be he Brahma, Vishnu or Maheshwara. Earth is worshipped as Bhoomimata, Mother Earth. The aspect of Mother and the associated love and compassion are clearly implied in such worship. But the mission of Durga is primary and not supportive and this uniqueness requires her to be powerful, even frightening at times, with the spirit to fight fiercely in order to restore dharma. Also, while Durga is a terrifying shaktimata to her adversaries, she is a karunaamayi as well, full of compassion and love for her devotees.

Durga is visualized as a powerful female divinity riding a lion (or tiger) and armed in all her eighteen hands. Festivals held at Navaratri (nine nights during September-October, near winter harvest period) to celebrate Durga each year emphasize Hindus' recognition of the need for strength to protect dharma as an indispensable tool of life.

The Durga in front of you is a marble image of the goddess seated on a lion with a variety of weapons. She is beautiful, compassionate to us devotees, but clearly a terror to Mahisha who lies at her feet with the trident through his heart! Each of the small niches houses a form of Durga that is special to people from different parts of India.



Katha (Story):

The manner in which the manifestation of Durga came about is unlike that of other goddesses. When the demon Mahishasura conquered the heavens and drove Indra (Lord of Gods) out of his kingdom, the gods feared for their safety and began to descend to earth. Brahma and Shiva could not bear this assault on dharma any more. They, along with many gods and demigods, visited Mahavishnu and described Mahisha's onslaught and the resulting lack of balance between the forces of good and those of evil. This recounting angered the assembled gods so much that bolts of light began to issue from their bodies. The fusion of these lights gave birth to a feminine form with immense power. It is said that each part of the Devi was formed of light sources from individual gods. For example, her face came into being by Shiva's light, her hair from Yama's light, her arms from Vishnu's light, and her feet from Brahma's light.

In addition the devas offered her a variety of weaponry: a trident from Shiva, a discus from Vishnu, a conch from Varuna, a spear from Agni, a bow and quiver full of arrows from Vaayu, a thunderbolt from Indra, and a noose from Yama.

Armed thus, the Devi roared with anger and the three worlds shook. There ensued a fierce battle between her and the asuras of Mahisha. During the gruesome battle Durga slew thousands of demons and the enormous loss of his forces brought forth Mahisha himself. Mahisha assumed several forms in his effort to defeat Durga but finally she slew him by stomping over him and driving a trident through his heart. Thus ends the saga of Durga's triumph over Mahisha which

restored dharma, returning the three worlds to normalcy and a healthy balance of good against evil.

[10]

Muruga



ओं श्रीषण्मुखाय नमः
ओं नमो स्कन्दाय नमः

Om SreeShaNmukhaaya namaH
Om namO skandaaya namaH

Om, Salutations to Shanmukha, to Skanda

मयूराधिरूढम् महावाक्यगूडम् मनोहारिदेहम् महाचित्तगेहम्
महीदेवदेवं महावेदभावं महादेवबालम् भजे लोकपालम्

*mayUrAdhirooDham mahAvAkyagUDam manOhAridEham
mahaachittagEham mahIdEvadEvaM mahaavEdabhAvaM
mahaadEvabAlam bhajE lokapAlam*

I worship that Lord of the Universe; the charming son of Mahadeva, who rides the peacock; is the essence of the *mahaa vakyaas*; dwelling in the heart of great sages; the quintessence of the four Vedas!

गुहाय नमः षण्मुखाय नमः फालनेत्रसुताय नमः प्रभवे नमः
पिंगलाय नमः शिखिवाहनाय नमः द्विशङ्कुजाय नमः द्विशन्नेत्राय नमः शक्तिधराय नमः

*guhaaya namaH, ShaNmukhaaya namaH, phaaanEtrasutaaya namaH,
prabhavE namaH, piMgalaaya namaH, shikhivaahanaaya namaH,
dvishadbhujaaya namaH, dvishannEtraaya namaH, shaktidharaaya namaH*

Salutations to the invisible Lord; the six-faced one; the son of the three-eyed Siva; the Lord Supreme; the golden-hued one; the rider on the peacock; the lord with the twelve hands; the lord with the twelve eyes; the wielder of the Lance.

In this sanctum, Muruga and his consorts, Valli and Devasena, are sculpted in granite along with their vehicle, the peacock. This setting allows traditional worship of Muruga with *abhishekams* (bathing) of the images with water, honey, milk, buttermilk in a traditional manner.

About Muruga:

Tamilian Hindus around the world from Tamil Nadu to Sri Lanka to Singapore worship Muruga or Murugan. Muruga is known by several names: Skanda, Kumara, Kartikeya, Shanmukha and Subrahmanya. Kalidasa's Kumara Sambhavam depicts the birth of Muruga.



Katha (Stories):

The story of Muruga begins with the havoc caused by an asura known as Taraka. Through austerities and prayers the asuras were able to claim extraordinary boons from gods and sages. This led them to long for supremacy over the devas. They tormented devas and humans by disrupting sacred ceremonies, resulting in considerable suffering and devastation. Thanks to the power acquired through boons they could not easily be defeated. Tarakasura aspired to conquer the entire universe and nothing, it appeared, could stop him. In such cases, the devas generally sought the aid of Shiva, especially if the boons had been granted by Shiva in the first place.

But Shiva was mostly in a meditative state and everyone feared to disturb him lest he open his third eye and destroy anyone caught in his gaze. The general idea was to arouse Shiva through passion, and who better than Kamadeva (Cupid) to do the trick? When the devas approached Kama, he trembled at the thought but realized the seriousness of the situation and agreed to help. Goddess Parvati began to meditate upon her Lord for this divine cause. At the appointed hour Kama approached Shiva and shot his arrow of love consisting of five flowers. The third eye opened and Kama was instantly in ashes. The ball of agni (fire) emanating from Shiva's fury fell into the waters of Saravana (forest of arrow-like grass) in the Himalayas and the six sparks of fire turned into six babies. These babies were nursed by six mothers, the Krithikai maidens (Greek: Pleiades), thus the name Kartikeya. When Parvati gathered all the six babies and made them as one, the child was known as Shanmukha (six faces).

Shanmukha became the powerful general of Shiva's army and his mother Parvati gifted Skanda the Vel, a powerful lance (leading to the name Saktivelan). He and his army destroyed Taraka and his brothers in a six-day battle and that day in October or November is celebrated by worshippers as Skanda Sashti. The devas were liberated. Indra was restored to his kingdom and gave his daughter Devasena in marriage to Skanda.

Bhudevi/Andaal



ओं श्री भूदेव्यै नमः

OM Sree bhUdEvyai namaH

I offer my salutations to Goddess Bhudevi

गोदे त्वमेव जननि त्वद् अभीष्ट वारहाम्
वाचम् प्रसन्न मधुरां मम सम्बिधि

*gOdE tvamEva janani tvad abhIshTa vaarahaam
vaacham prasanna madhuraam mama samvidhi*

O Goda Devi! You alone are the Mother, beloved of Varaha;
May you bestow words pleasing and gracious speech

श्रीविष्णुचित्त कुल नंदन कल्पवल्लीं
श्रीरंगराज हरिचंदन योग दृश्यामः
साक्षात्क्षमां करुणया कमलामिवान्यां
गोदामनन्यशरणः शरणं प्रपद्ये

shrIviSNuchitta kula naMdana kalpavallIM
shrIraMgaraaja harichaMdana yOga dRushyaamaH
saakshaatkShamaaM karuNayaa kamalaamivaanyaM
gOdaamananyasharaNaH sharaNaM prapadyE

I seek refuge in none other than Godadevi; beloved of VishNuchitthar's family;
the wish-granting Kalpavrksa; the most beautiful; with her Lord Srirangaraja;
the very incarnation of compassion, and none other than Mahalakshmi.

About Andaal:

Andaal or Bhudevi is a consort of Satyanarayana. She is Mother Earth who was rescued by an avatar of Vishnu known as Varaha. She is also associated with one of the twelve Alvars (Vaishnavite Saints). The vigrahas (images) in these three principal sanctums--of Bhudevi, Satyanarayana and Lakshmi--as well as Ganapati and the Navagrahas were all sculpted in krishna shila (black granite) in Bangalore and consecrated in the last week of May 1999, twenty years to the day when the Connecticut Valley Hindu Temple Society was inaugurated.



Katha (Story):

Legend has it that a baby appeared in a pot of a tulasi (sacred basil) in the garden of Sri Vishnuchitta (known as Perialwar or Senior Saint), devoted to Vishnu, in Srivilliputhur in Tamil Nadu. The baby was lovingly raised by Perialwar in a religious atmosphere of bhakti. As she grew up she imagined herself to be a gopi in love with the presiding deity at Srirangam (Sriranganatha), and thought of Srivilliputhur as Gokul, the village where Krishna was raised. She composed two loving devotional song sequences which are still favorites among Vaishnavites: Tiruppavai and Tirumozhi, full of bhakti and beauty. The intensity of her desire to dedicate herself to the Lord was so extreme that her father, in a dream, was ordered by the Lord to bring Andal to him dressed as a bride. Andal entered the sanctum, became one with him and has been worshipped ever since as his consort. It is said to be as though the tulasi plant became entwined with the great tree Harichandan (Ranganatha).

Mahalakshmi



ओं महालक्ष्म्यै नमः

OM mahaalakSmyai namaH

I offer my salutations to Goddess Mahaalakshmi

लक्ष्मीं क्षीर समुद्र तनयां श्रीरंग धामेश्वरीम्
दासी भूत समस्त देव वनितां लोकैक दीपांकुरां
श्रीमन्मंद कटाक्ष लब्ध विभव ब्रह्मेन्द्र गंगाधराम्
त्वां त्रैलोक्य कुटुंबिनीं सरसिजाम् वंदे मुकुंद प्रियाम्

*lakShmeeM kSheera samudra tanayaaM SreeraMga dhaameshwareem
daasee bhUta samasta dEva vanitaaM lOKaika deepaaMkuraaM*

*shreemanmaMda kaTaakSha labdha vibhava brahmEndra gaMgaadharaam
twaaM trailOkya kuTuMbineeM sarasijaam vaMdE mukuMda priyaam.*

I worship Mahaalakshmi, daughter of the king of the Milky Ocean; queen of the abode of Mahaavishnu; who is served by the consorts of all the gods; who is the one light of the universe; through whose benign grace, Brahma, Indra and Shiva attained their exalted positions; who is mother of the three worlds; who is called Kamala; and who is the beloved consort of Mukunda.

Chant the several names of Lakshmi:

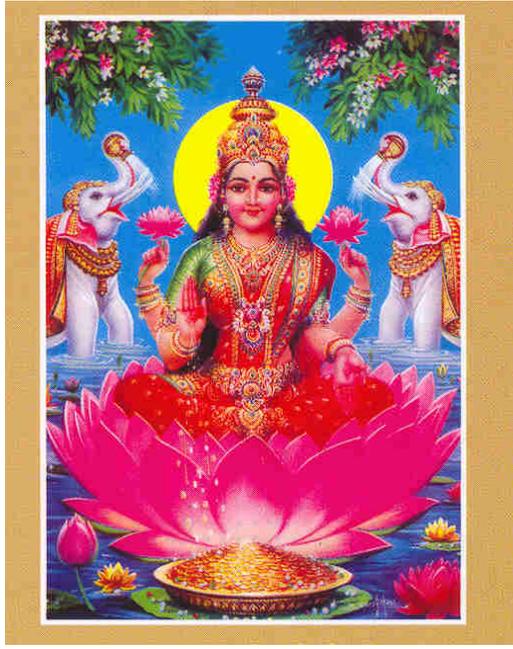
ओं कमलाय नमः रमायै नमः लोकमात्रे नमः विश्व जनन्यै नमः महालक्ष्मै नमः क्षीराब्धि
तनयायै नमः विश्व साक्षिन्यै नमः चंद्र सहोदर्यै नमः

*OM kamalaaya namaH, ramaayai namaH, lokamaatrE namaH, vishva
jananyai namaH, mahaalakShmai namaH, kSheeraabdhi tanayaayai namaH,
vishva saakShinyai namaH, chaMdra sahOdaryai namaH*

I salute Mahaalakshmi who is known as Kamala (lotus lady); Ramaa (beautiful lady); who is the mother of the universe; daughter of the Lord of the Milky Ocean; who sees everything; and who is the sister of Chandra (Moon).

About Mahalakshmi:

Mahalakshmi is usually depicted as a beautiful, graceful devi, full of love and compassion, seated on a lotus or standing on a lotus pedestal. Sometimes she is also shown anointed with water pouring from trunks of elephants on either side (Gajalakshmi), or with gold coins showering from two of her four hands. A wide variety of prayers depicting these various attributes may be found in the Sri Sukta, a series of hymns in praise of Lakshmi.



Hindus revere Mahalakshmi as Jagajjanani, Mother of the Universe, and representation of the female energy of the Supreme Being. She is the goddess of fortune and prosperity and bestower of wellbeing and wealth. Mahalakshmi was one of the fourteen precious items emerging from the cosmic Ocean of Milk with a lotus in her hand at the Amritamanthana, the episode of the churning of the Ocean at the end of a cataclysmic flood. She is the consort of Vishnu and plays that role in every re-incarnation of Vishnu. For example, she was Sita in Ramavatar, and Radha in Krishnavatar.

It is a Hindu practice to meditate first on Mahalakshmi upon waking up at the beginning of each day. We are asked to look at our palms and recite the following shloka:

कराग्रौ वसते लक्ष्मी करमध्ये सरस्वति
करमूलेतु गोविंदः प्रभाते करदर्शनं

**karaagrE vasatE lakShmI karamadhyE saraswati
karamULEtu gOviMdaH prabhaatE karadarshanaM**

At the top of the hands resides Lakshmi and at the center Saraswati. And at the base resides Govinda. Thus we should look at our palms in the morning.

Among the days of the week, Friday is considered most auspicious to the worship of Mahalakshmi. Often Hindus make sure that lights at home are turned on at dusk on Fridays to welcome Lakshmi. At temples where Lakshmi is installed, it is common to conduct an elaborate worship on Friday evenings.

In traditional South Indian weddings, musicians perform a special song in praise of Lakshmi as the bride first enters the wedding hall with her entourage.

In certain parts of India, it is a practice of merchants and businesses to worship Mahalakshmi during the Diwali festival. In fact businesses use this special day of celebration to close the books and make preparations to begin the new fiscal year.

Satyanarayana



ओं श्रीसत्यनारायणस्वामिनेनमः

OM SrIsatyanaaraayaNaswaaminEnamaH

Salutations to Satyanarayana!

Now you are standing in front of the presiding deity in our Temple: Akhilaandakoti Brahmaanda Naayaka (the most supreme Lord of the entire universe) Satyanarayana. We seek his *krpaakattaksha* (merciful gaze) and crave his *abhayahasta* (assuring hand mudra). We ask him to bless us, our family, our community, our country and the whole world. He

is the very incarnation of the Hindu trinity; Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara, worshipped by millions of Hindus all over the world. In addition to the usual symbols held in his hands (conch, discus and mace), the fourth hand (upper right) of Satyanarayana in this shrine shows the abhaya mudra, assuring protection of his devotees with a “Do not fear” symbol.

किरीटिनं गदिनं चक्र हस्तं
इच्छामि त्वाम् दृष्टुमहम् तथैव
तेनैव रूपेण चतुर्भुजेन
सहस्र बाहो भव विश्वमूर्ते

*kireeTinaM gadinaM chakra hastaM
ichChaami tvaam dRushTumaham tathaiva
tEnaiva roopENA chaturbhujEna
sahasra baahO bhava vishvamoortE*

I long to see the thousand-armed Lord in that form
adorned with a crown, holding the discus and mace in his hands.

Satyanarayana is the most appropriate godhead to worship in this yuga (Kali Yuga) and in this country as he alone bestows prosperity and wellbeing. Hindus in Connecticut have had the distinction of receiving his grace and sanctifying his Temple on May 30, 1999, twenty years to the day when the Connecticut Valley Hindu Temple Society, Inc. (CVHTS) was inaugurated. He represents the sum and substance of all that you have seen today and more. He stands here in all his splendor and his radiance and we are drawn by his magnetism upon entering the Temple.

Now chant the variety of names used in worshipping Satyanarayana and note how all-encompassing the names are.

OM kEshavAya namaH, nArAyaNAya namaH, mAdhavAya namaH, gOviMdAya
namaH, viShNavE namaH, madhusUdanAya namaH, trivikramAya namaH, SrIdharAya
namaH, hRuShIkEshAya namaH, padmanABAya namaH, dAmOdarAya namaH,
matsyAya namaH, kUrmAya namaH, varAhAya namaH, nArasiMhAya namaH,
vAmanAya namaH, saMkarShaNaya namaH, vAsudEvAya namaH, adhOkShajAya
namaH, achyutAya namaH, janArdanAya namaH, upEMdrAya namaH, harayE namaH,
parashurAmAya namaH, rAmAya namaH, kRuShNAya namaH, budhdhAya namaH,
kalkinE namaH
OM SrI satyanArAyaNa swAminE namaH.

ओं केशवाय नमः, नारायणाय नमः, माधवाय नमः, गोविंदाय नमः, विष्णवे नमः, मधुसूदनाय नमः, त्रिविक्रमाय नमः, श्रीधराय नमः, हृषीकेशाय नमः, पद्मनाभाय नमः, दामोदराय नमः, मत्स्याय नमः, कूर्माय नमः, वराहाय नमः, नारसिंहाय नमः, वामनाय नमः, संकर्षणाय नमः, वासुदेवाय नमः, अधोक्षजाय नमः, अच्युताय नमः, जनार्दनाय नमः, उपेंद्राय नमः, हरये नमः, परशुरामाय नमः, रामाय नमः, कृष्णाय नमः, बुध्धाय नमः, कल्किने नमः
ओं श्री सत्यनारायण स्वामिने नमः.

Let us surrender to HIM and seek His grace by chanting the following shloka.

मूकं करोति वाचालम् पंगुं लंघयते गिरिम्
यत्कृपा तमहम् वंदे परमानंद माधवं

*mookaM karOti vaachalam, paMguM laMghayatE girim
yatkRupaa tamaham vaMdE, paramaanaMda maadhavaM*

I salute that blissful Lord whose grace makes
the mute eloquent and the lame leap mountains.

Let us discard all pride, all ego and all selfishness and surrender to him. Pray that he grant the ancient Hindu wish:

सर्वे जनाः सुखिनो भवन्तु समस्त सन्मंगलानि भवन्तु

sarvE janaaH sukhinO bhavaMtu, samasta sanmaMgalaani bhavaMtu

May everyone be happy, and may his grace be on the entire universe.

Now you are standing in front of the presiding deity in our Temple: Akhilaandakoti Brahmaanda Naayaka (the most supreme Lord of the entire universe) Satyanarayana. We seek his *krpaakattaksha* (merciful gaze) and crave his *abhatyahasta* (assuring hand mudra). We ask him to bless us, our family, our community, our country and the whole world. He is the very incarnation of the Hindu trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara, worshipped by millions of Hindus all over the world. In addition to the usual symbols held in his hands (conch, discus and mace), the fourth hand (upper right) of Satyanarayana in this shrine shows the *abhaya mudra*, assuring protection of his devotees with a “Do not fear” symbol. He is the most appropriate godhead to worship in this yuga (Kali Yuga) and in this country as he alone bestows prosperity and wellbeing. Hindus in Connecticut have had the distinction of receiving his grace and sanctifying his Temple on May 30, 1999, twenty years to the day when the Connecticut Valley Hindu Temple Society, Inc. (CVHTS) was inaugurated. He represents the sum and substance of

all that you have seen today and more. He stands here in all his splendor and his radiance and we are drawn by his magnetism upon entering the Temple.

Let us discard all pride, all ego and all selfishness and surrender to him. Pray that he grant the ancient Hindu wish:

सर्वे जनाः सुखिनो भवन्तु समस्त सन्मंगलानि भवन्तु

sarvE janaaH sukhinO bhavaMtu, samasta sanmaMgalaani bhavaMtu

May everyone be happy, and may his grace be on the entire universe.

ओं श्रीसत्यनारायणस्वामिनेनमः

OM SrIsatyanaaraayaNaswaaminEnamaH

Salutations to Satyanarayana!

मूकं करोति वाचालम् पंगुं लंघयते गिरिम्
यत्कृपा तमहम् वंदे परमानंद माधवं

**mookaM karOti vaachalam, paMguM laMghayatE girim
yatkRupaa tamaham vaMdE, paramaanaMda maadhavaM**

I salute that blissful Lord whose grace makes
the mute eloquent and the lame leap mountains.

किरीटिनं गदिनं चक्र हस्तं
इच्छामि त्वाम् दृष्टुमहम् तथैव
तेनैव रूपेण चतुर्भुजेन
सहस्र बाहो भव विश्वमूर्ते

**kireeTinaM gadinaM chakra hastaM
ichChaami tvaam dRushTumaham tathaiva
tEnaiva roopENA chaturbhujENA
sahasra baahO bhava vishvamoortE**

I long to see the thousand-armed Lord in that form
adorned with a crown, holding the discus and mace in his hands.

This completes the tour of the sanctums. You may now circumambulate the main sanctums two more times and return to your ishtadevata and offer a concluding prayer as shown below:

त्वमेव माताच पिता त्वमेव
त्वमेव बंधुश्च सखा त्वमेव
त्वमेव विद्या द्रविणं त्वमेव
त्वमेव सर्वं मम देव देव

*tvamEva maataacha pitaa tvamEva
tvamEva baMdhushcha sakhaa tvamEva
tvamEva vidyaa draviNaM tvamEva
tvamEva sarvaM mama dEva dEva*

**You alone are our mother and father
You alone are our sibling and friend
You alone are our knowledge and prosperity
You alone are everything to us
My Lord, my Lord**

क्षमापणं

kShamaapanaM
Surrender

कायेन वाचा मनसेन्द्रियैर्वा
बुध्यात्मनावा प्रकृते स्वभावात्
करोमि यद्यत् सकलं परस्मै
श्रीमन्नरायणेति समर्पयामि

*kaayEna vaachaa manasEMdriyairvaa
budhyaatmanaavaa prakRutE swabhaavaat
karOmi yadyat sakalaM parasmai
SrImannaraayaNEti samarpayaami*

Whatever I have performed through my actions,
speech, thought, knowledge, or my own inclination,
may all that be surrendered to Srimannarayana.

This ends our prayer walk. If you have borrowed this booklet, then please return it to the Front Desk. Namaskar

AFTERWORD FOR VISITORS FROM OTHER FAITHS

Dr. Sheenu Srinivasan

अतिथि देवो भवः atithi dEvO bhava – The guest is verily God!

(from the Yajur Veda, Taittiriya Upanishad)

SuswaagataM to you, our brothers and sisters! We welcome our guests from other faiths to this temple with open arms. We are glad you are here and we are confident that you will have a very unique experience as you complete the tour. We ask that you remove your shoes in the assigned area and walk around the temple in the order suggested, quietly, and in a contemplative mood.

Hindus regard guests as God as stated in the ancient citation above. So you are special to us. As you walk through the sanctuary, you will notice that we worship a variety of gods and goddesses and aspects of nature. The latter is a testimony to our ancestors' keen interest in learning about the outer universe even as they focused inwards to understand the inner universe, the Atman.

Polytheism essentially directs the worshipper's gaze outward, but Hindus learn early in their development that worship of different gods in its true essence is worship of that one Supreme Being, the Paramatman. While Hindus may choose a particular god or goddess or a variety of godheads to venerate, they recognize the central idea of a single, eternal, merciful, loving, radiant, infinite, omniscient, omnipresent Supreme Consciousness, a niraakaara or formless One whose grace we seek and to whom we surrender. Thus ritual worship addressed to a particular deity is in some sense a stepping stone to higher planes in one's spiritual development. This philosophical outlook extends even beyond the confines of a single religious approach in that it simply, and without reservation, accepts ALL paths to gaining knowledge of the supreme Self to be equally valid. This universal outlook is firmly embedded in the Vedic dictum: **ऐकं सत् विप्राः बहुदा वदन्ति** (EkaM sat viprAH bahudaa vadanti: Truth is One and the wise utter it in different ways).

During your tour, you may be able to view a puja or ceremony in progress. A puja may be no more than an archana or simple offering of fruit, flowers and incense in return for a personal or family blessing conducted by the priest at the shrine. It may also be an hours-long communal worship with elaborate rites of invocation, enumeration of place and time, abhishekam (washing the image(s) with milk, water, honey and other materials), followed by dress and ornamentation, food offerings, rituals with water and fire, during which the godhead is welcomed as an honored guest. This is followed by a long prayer session, ending with a sharing of prasadam (food offering) and tirtham (drink offering). You may choose to approach and receive the prasadam or simply observe. Special ornaments and flower garlands, rice and other samagri (incense, sandal, ash, etc.) and ritual vessels will be used during the prayer. Occasionally the ceremony includes the building of a fire altar.

We hope with these preliminary notes in context, you may observe better both what you see as you walk through as well as the subtle embedded philosophy of the Hindus. We sincerely hope

and pray that as you complete the tour, you will go home with the faith in your own faith reinforced.

Priests at CVHTS



Left to right: **Sri. B.S. Madhusudan Bhattar**, **Sri. M.R. Venkatesh Bhatt**, **Sri. N.R. Ramachandra Bhattar**, **Sri. Mahesh Chandra Joshiji**, **Sri. H. R. Krishnamurthy**



नमस्ते
namastE!

GLOSSARY

- Aaditya*, son of Aaditi (infinity, endless heaven); the Sun;
- Andal*, or *Andaal*, as Bhudevi: consort of Varaha, a Vishnu avatar; consort of Satyanarayana; Earth Mother; also, the poet Andal;
- Angaraka*, Mars; one of the Navagrahas;
- Arjuna*, famous archer and warrior, son of Pandu (hence one of the 5 Pandava princes) and his queen Kunti; Krishna was his charioteer at the Battle of Kurukshetra and their dialogue forms the Bhagavad Gita;
- asura*, anti-god, titan, a class of divine or daimonic beings opposed to the devas;
- Atharva Veda*, one of the four principal Vedas which form the *shruti* or revealed wisdom which is the basis of Hinduism;
- Atman*, the individual, imperishable soul;
- Ayyappa*, Lord of Sabarimala; offspring of Mohini (Vishnu) and Shiva; also known as Hariharan, Ayyanar and Manikanta;
- Bhagavad Gita*, Song of God; Krishna's counsel to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra as told in the Sanskrit epic, the Mahabharata; now accepted as revealed scripture (*sruti*);
- Bhudevi*: consort of Varaha; consort of Satyanarayana; Earth Mother; Andal;.
- Brahma*, (pronounced Bram-ha), major deity; one of the Hindu trinity: Creator;
- Brahmaan*, the Supreme Being, the Paramatman, or Oversoul;
- Bhrigu*, a sage;
- Brhaspati*, Jupiter; also: Guru; teacher of the gods; one of the Navagrahas;
- Budha*, Mercury, one of the Navagrahas;
- Chandra*, the Moon; also called Shashi and Soma;
- deva*, god;
- devi*, goddess;
- dharma*, right course of conduct;
- Divakara*, Sun;
- Durga*, the great Devi or goddess, in her powerful but beneficent form;
- Ganapati*, also Ganesha, elephant-headed god, remover of obstacles; son of Parvati;
- gopi*, cowherd girl;
- Gopala*, Krishna as cowherd;
- Govinda*, Krishna;
- Guru*, Brhaspati; Jupiter;
- Indra*, chief of the Vedic gods, Lord of Heaven and of the thunderbolt;
- Jainism*, Indian religion; associated with a succession of spiritual leaders called tirthankars, and with nonviolence;
- Kalpavriksha*, magic wish-tree in Indra's heaven;
- Kartikeya*, a son of Shiva; raised by the Krithikai (the Pleiades); Skanda;
- Ketu*, Cauda Draconis; one of the Navagrahas; maleficent influence associated with comets, falling stars;
- Krishna*, avatar of Vishnu; in the epic Mahabharata: prince of Dwaraka, kinsman and charioteer of Arjuna;
- Ksheerasagara*, the cosmic Ocean of Milk; father of Lakshmi and Bhudevi;
- Kuja*, Mars;
- Lakshmi*, also Mahalakshmi, consort of Vishnu through all his manifestations;
- Maha-*, prefix, = 'great'; attached to the names of many gods;
- Mahabharata*, Sanskrit epic; great story of the princes of the race of Bharata; of the quarrel between two sets of cousins which extended into a war between good and evil for the sake of dharma;
- Mahadeva*, Shiva;
- Mahalakshmi*, consort of Satyanarayana; Lakshmi;
- Mahavira*, 24th tirthankar; Vardhaman
- Maheshwara*, = great Ishwara; Shiva;
- Mahisha*, an asura; defeated by Durga;
- Mangala*, Mars; one of the Navagrahas;
- Murugan*; son of Shiva; Skanda;
- Navagrahas*, or "Nine Planets"; nine heavenly bodies or aspects important to Vedic astrology: Surya (Sun), Chandras (Moon), Angaraka (Mars), Budha (Mercury), Brhaspati (Jupiter), Shukra (Venus), Shani (Saturn), Rahu (Caput Draconis) and Ketu (Cauda Draconis);
- Om*, sometimes spelled *Aum*, a syllable for 'God';
- Parvati*, = daughter of the mountains, wife of Shiva through many manifestations;

Pootana, demoness that preyed on the infant Krishna, and was slain by him;
Purana, a story of gods, mythological heroes or sages; along with the epics, they form that body of Hindu scripture called *smrithi* or remembered wisdom;
rakshasas, demons;
Radha, the consort of Krishna;
Rahu, Caput Draconis; one of the Navagrahas; maleficent influence associated with eclipses;
Ram Parivar, an iconic tableau, consisting of Rama or Ramachandra, his devoted wife Sita and brother Lakshmana who went with him into exile, and his faithful follower Hanuman, the monkey king.
Rama, prince of Ayodhya; avatar of Vishnu; ideal king;
Ramayana, Sanskrit epic; the story of Rama: his birth, exile, battle with Ravana, demon-king of Lanka and rescue of his wife Sita; his triumphal return with his wife, brother Lakshmana and devoted followers, Hanuman and others, and coronation;
Ravi, Sun;
Rig Veda, earliest of the four Vedas;
Rishabdev, Adinatha; first of Tithankar;
rishis, ancient and powerful sages;
Sama Veda, one of the four Vedas;
Sanskrit, liturgical language of Hinduism; oldest extant member of the Indo-European family of languages;
Satyanarayana, a godhead associated with wellbeing; combines the attributes of Vishnu and Shiva; worshipped at the full moon;
Shani, Saturn; one of the Navagrahas;
Shatrughna; twin brother of Lakshmana; brother of Rama and Bharata;
Shiva, major deity, member of the Hindu trinity, the destroyer and restorer of time and the universe;

shloka, verse stanza;
Shri, prefix of respect, attached to the names of many gods;
Shriranganatha, Vishnu;
Shukra, Venus; one of the Navagrahas; teacher of the asuras;
Simhika, lion-faced demon; father of Rahu;
Skanda, son of Shiva, younger brother of Ganesha; Kartikeya; Murugan;
Subramania, Murugan; Kumara; Skanda;
Surya, the Sun; one of the Navagrahas;
Upanishads, metaphysical discourses which form the speculative body of wisdom attached to the four Vedas;
vahana, vehicle associated with each god;
Valmiki, composer of the Ramayana;
Varaha, a Vishnu avatar; he rescued the Earth during a catastrophic flood;
Varuna, Vedic god of the sea;
Vayu, Vedic god of wind;
Ved Vyasa, composer of the Mahabharata;
Veda, = wisdom; usually refers to the four Vedas; each is divided into hymns (samhita); rituals and formulas (brahmanas) and metaphysical discourses on the themes of the hymns (aranyakas and upanishads).
Venkateshwara, Vishnu;
Vishnu, major deity; member of the Hindu trinity; Preserver; appears as an avatar or savior reborn through the ages to save the three worlds from destruction due to lack of dharma;
Yajur Veda, one of the four principal Vedas;
Yama, Vedic god of the underworld; judge of the dead;
Yashoda, foster mother of Krishna;
yuga; Age of the world, as in Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and our current Kali Yuga.

Transliteration Scheme *

अ आ इ ई उ ऊ ऋ ॠ ए ऐ ऋ ओ औ अं अः

क ख ग घ ङ

च छ ज झ ञ

त थ द ध न

ट ठ ड ढ ण

प फ ब भ म

य र ल व स श ष ह ळ

a A i I u U Ru RU e E ai o O au aM aH
(A or aa, U or uu, etc. may also be used.)

ka Ka ga Ga ~Ga

ca Ca ja Ja ~Ja

ta tha da dha na

Ta Tha Da Dha Na

pa Pa ba Ba ma

ya ra la va sa Sa Sha ha La

* Based on Baraha script

Prayer Walk at the Satyanarayana Temple
11 Training Hill Road
Middletown, Connecticut

Acknowledgements

कृतज्ञ

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I would like to thank the CVHTS management and in particular President, Dr. Siva Jada, and the Puja Committee for reviewing the text and approving this document for use in the Temple. My special thanks go to Dr. Mohan Kasaraneni, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, for his keen interest in this project and support for its publication. My very special thanks go to my wife Kamla, whose idea was this project in the first place, and who took on the meticulous task of editing this complex text.

I thank my daughters, Asha and Sandhya, and the Kasaraneni children, Sarika and Karthik, for going over the material in its draft form and offering valuable comments from the perspective of the second generation.

This text, consisting as it does, Sanskrit shlokas, English text, English transliteration and translation, with very many words and phrases, is bound to contain errors. The author would very much appreciate receiving comments pertaining to these and thanks in advance those who do take the time to review and offer the corrections. He may be reached via email at sheenuav@yahoo.com.

Dr. Sheenu Srinivasan
Glastonbury, Connecticut
March 2005