

DEEPAM

Volume 23, Issue 2

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Hindu Temple

(Image source: HIndugodwallpaper.com)

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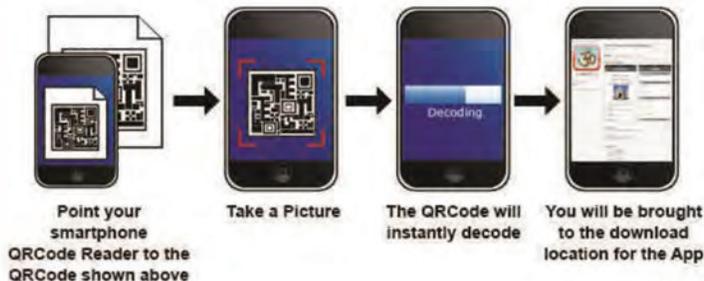
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Android Version



- ⇒ Daily Events Calendar
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Om Sri Ganeshaya Namaha.

On behalf of our temple's Executive Committee I am extending very hearty New Year greetings to our devotees and their families. During the past years, our devotee community has grown in numbers and our temple continues to receive more puja service requests. To meet such increasing demands, we may have to hire additional staff in coming year Also we still have debt to retire from our expansion activity that we did to support our children and our larger community. While many have continued to show great support to our temple's operations, I would like to see more families to come forward in this New Year to financially support the temple. Small or medium or large contributions of donations in any comfortable frequency to a devotee to help our temple are sincerely appreciated. Please step up to donate. Increase in community participation gives a strong foundation by helping the temple to retire debt in this New Year and providing for stable operations. With the effort and dedication of volunteers, the committee and board members would be able to make progress on increased set of services in support of pujas, Bal Vihar, VCN and other cultural and spiritual activities in this New Year .

Every devotee family understands the significance and power of community involvement in achieving the common goal, a strong Hindu Temple in Omaha. To quote from The Dalai Lama – "Without the human community, one single human being cannot survive". In our context, our temple is our community's foundation and it is every one of our responsibility to make it strong and grow in all years to come. I sincerely request all well-wishers of our temple in this New Year to volunteer more and support our temple's activities. This New Year we are reaching another important milestone of 12 years completion from the first kumbhabishekam. As per temple guide-



lines, we are planning to celebrate Mahakumbhabhishekam from May 28th to May 31st. It is once in a life time opportunity to be part of this very auspicious puja celebration. Sponsoring this puja brings great blessings from all our temple deities to devotees and their entire family. All are requested to keep these dates penciled in as they schedule their personal events in May.

May Lord Prasanna Ganapathi grant His holy blessings to all of our devotees in this New Year.

Namaskarams.

Suresh Seshadri

President - EC (2014-15)



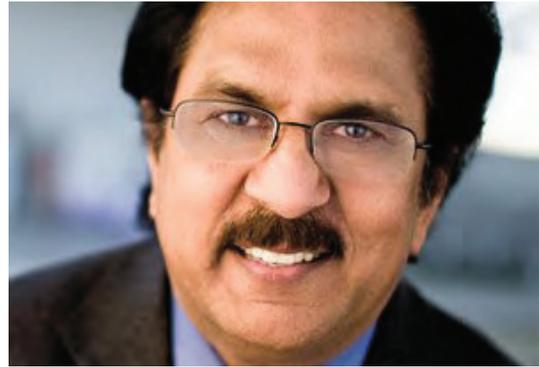
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Devotees,

Happy New Year! It has been six months since I became the chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Hindu Temple. During this short time, I have seen significant growth in various programs at the Temple. The first ever North American Hindu Summit was telecasted live around the United States and India. It was a great success, organized by two patrons, Drs. Tej Adidam and Sanjay Singh. In addition, our annual Deepawali celebration was a fantastic experience and I am sure our Devotees enjoyed the performances by our children as much as I did. Finally, our fundraising has been very fruitful, with special kudos to Drs. Alekha Dash and Ram Bishu for their organization and leadership. It was great to see so many donations by old and new patrons, some pledging donations for the next three years! I humbly ask for your continued support to meet our operating costs and future plans for the Temple's expansion.

Moving forward, our next big event is MK15, scheduled for the summer of 2015, being organized under the chairmanship of Dr. Devendra Agrawal. He has my full support and I will encourage all of you to help him whichever way you can.

We are also in preliminary discussions in hiring a third priest as well as a coordinator for the Temple. I feel strongly that this will allow for more efficiency at our temple, helping to organize multiple pujas and activities, as requested by our Devotees.



Finally, friends, our temple is run by volunteers and they need our support. There have been concerns voiced regarding disruption of puja services including patrons arriving late and conversing during the service. Please be mindful and respectful of our volunteers with regards to these issues.

Thank you very much. I hope you continue to be a part of our great Temple's growth.

Sincerely,

Shailendra Saxena, MD, PhD

Chairman

Board of Trustees

Please Donate
Generously to Your Temple



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Pundit Damodara Bhattar
Sevak: Chandrasekhar Karmegam

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Member (13-15): Pradeep Gupta
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Member (14-16): Ranganath Mandalasri
Past President: Rakesh K. Singh
402-292-3790

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Education: Rajesh Sharma
Cultural: Deepa Kashyap & Gowridhar Madu
Mahaprasad: Gowridhar Madu
Facility Maintenance: Srinivas Mallipudi

Publications: Babu Guda
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Muralidhar Chintapalli
Temple Tours & Public Relation: Vandana Singh &
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Volunteer & Welcome: Sundara Chokkara
Youth and Community Relation: Alekha Dash
Social Hall Affairs: Jayaram Nagarajan
Nomination: Rakesh K. Singh
Vedantic Center of Nebraska: Phani Tej Adidam
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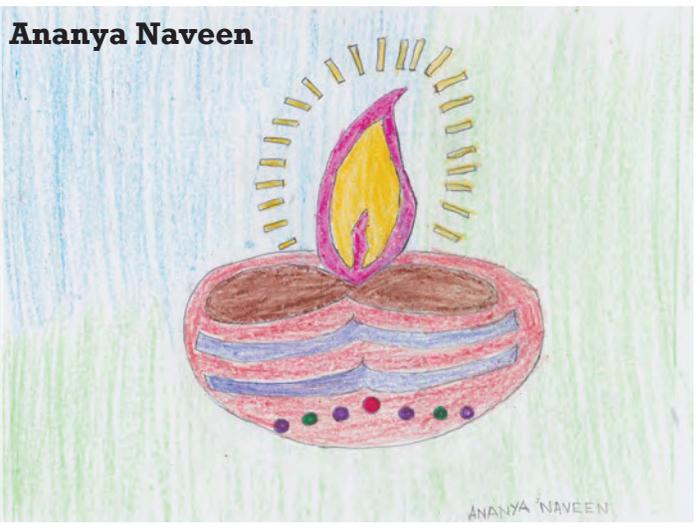
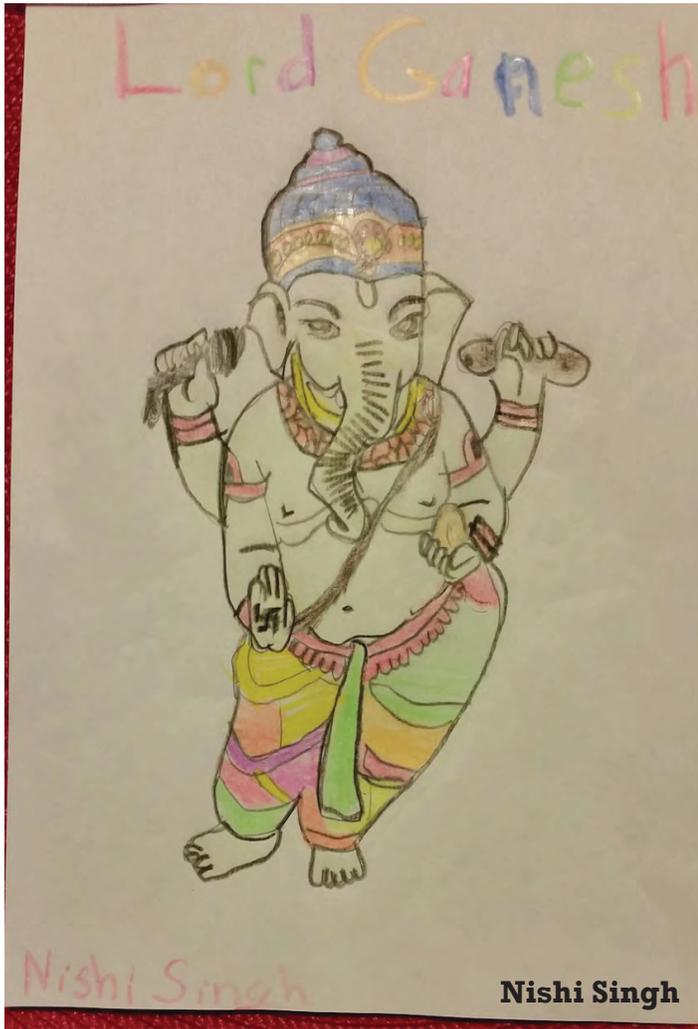
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

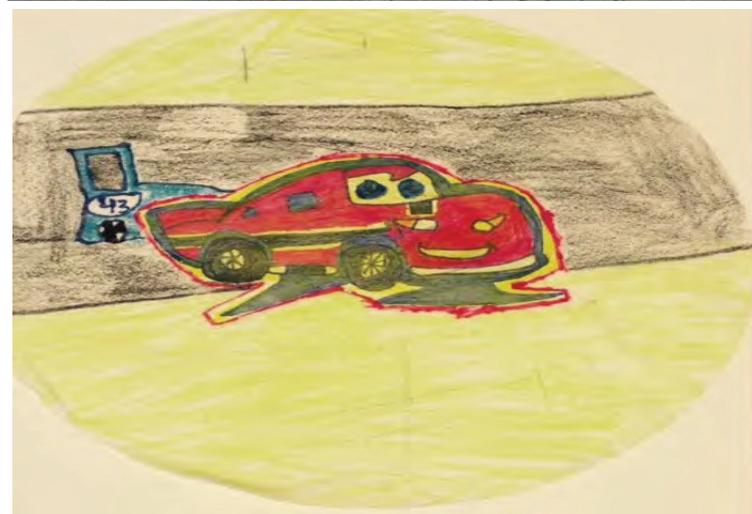
Chairperson: Shailendra Saxena
Vice Chairperson : Shashi Bhatia
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Member (13-15): Devendra K. Agarwal
Member (13-15): Naresh Dewan
Member (14-16): Dhirendra P. Singh
Member (14-16): Prem Bansal
Member (14-16): Gopi Gopalakrishnan

Fund Raising: Alekha Dash & Ram Bishu
Long Range Planning: Phani Tej Adidam
Past Chairperson: Prem Arora









As I walk into the Temple

By Anusha Deshpande (Tritia Senior, Balvihar)

As I sit and observe the temple, I see so many people coming in and out
Wanting to sit peacefully and pray to the supreme soul
I also see many people observing silence and thanking god that
We have this wonderful yet simple temple in Nebraska.
I see the priests giving prasad to the devotees,
worshipping god, doing pujas and performing rituals.
As I walk into the social hall, I see so many children,
The first generation who were born in America, carrying on Hinduism,
Passing it down and practicing to perform for a function soon.
I can see many chefs busily working to feed hundreds of devotees for the festival.
I see the Balvihar kids listening to the great epics, doing yoga, learning prayers
And the traditions of Hinduism.
We cannot forget the volunteers and the board members who make this faithful place possible.
Without our wonderful sevak we wouldn't be able to get much temple work done.
These parts of the temple form one community and become Our Hindu Temple in Nebraska.
What a beautiful and lovely temple that we are blessed with!



Festivals of Light and Color

By Rachna H. Keshwani

May tomorrow shine as bright as a Diya, and we hope today will not pass by too fast.
Without regrets we should live, and our thoughts spark good times from the past.
We turn the golden Arti about while we sing heartwarming songs of devotion,
Like the course that the planets take around the sun in circular motion.
From the ribbons in the rainbow, let us paint a brilliant Rangoli,
That reflects and celebrates our vibrance every day as Holi!

Pongal Festival

(Source:www.pongalfestival.org)

The Sangam Age in South India, around the fourth century B.C. is a landmark in her history. The word sangam is the Tamil form of the Sanskrit word Sangha which means a group of persons or an association. The celebrations of Sangam Era led to today's Pongal celebrations. As part of the festivities, maidens of the Sangam era observed 'Pavai Nonbu' at the time of Thai Niradal which was a major festival during the reign of the Pallavas .It was observed during the Tamil month of Margazhi (December-January). During this festival young girls prayed for rain and prosperity of the country. Throughout the month, they avoided milk and milk products. They would not oil their hair and refrained from using harsh words while speaking. Women used to bath early in the morning and worshiped the idol of Goddess Katyayani, which would be carved out of wet sand. They ended their penance on the first day of the month of Thai (January-February). This penance was to bring abundant rains to flourish the paddy. These traditions and customs of ancient times gave rise to Pongal celebrations.

There are some legendary stories associated with Pongal festival celebrations. The two most popular legends of Pongal are stories related to Lord Shiva and Lord Indra. According to a legend, once Lord Shiva asked his bull, Basava, to go to the earth and ask the mortals to have an oil massage and bath every day and to eat once a month. Inadvertently, Basava announced that everyone should eat daily and have an oil bath once a month. This mistake upset Lord Shiva who then cursed Basava, banishing him to live on the earth forever. He would have to plough the fields and help people produce more food. Thus the association of this day with cattle.

Another legend of Lord Indra and Lord Krishna also led to Pongal celebrations. It is said when

Lord Krishna were in his childhood, he decided to teach a lesson to Lord Indra who became arrogant after becoming the king of all deities. Lord Krishna asked all the cowherds to stop worshipping Lord Indra. This angered Lord Indra and sent forth his clouds for thunder-storms and 3 days continuous rains. Lord Krishna lifted Mount Govardhan to save all the humans. Later, Lord Indra realized his mistake and divine power of Krishna and worshipped him seeking His pardon.

The Pongal festival is spread over three days and is the most important and most fervently-celebrated harvest festival of South India. A special puja is performed on the first day of Pongal before the cutting of the paddy. Farmers worship the sun and the earth by anointing their ploughs and sickles with sandal wood paste. It is with these consecrated tools that the newly-harvested rice is cut. Each of the three days are marked by different festivities. The first day, Bhogi Pongal, is a day for the family. Surya Pongal, the second day, is dedicated to the worship of Surya, the Sun God. Boiled milk and jaggery is offered to the Sun God. The third day of Pongal, Mattu Pongal, is for worship of the cattle known as Mattu in local language. Cattle are bathed, their horns polished and painted in bright colors, and garlands of flowers placed around their necks. The Pongal that has been offered to the Gods is then given to cattle and birds to eat. Mankind living with nature was thus reinforced through this festival.



Maha Kumbhabhishekam at the Omaha Hindu Temple

28-31 May 2015

“Sarvaroga Nivrityartham, Sarva Yaga Phalapradham Sarva Sampathkaram-nreenam putrapoutrabhi vardhanam”

Significance: According to Agama Shastras, a “*punar uddhaarana Kumbhabhishekam*” (*Kumbha* means Shikhara or crown of the shrine; *Abhishekam* means sanctification with spiritually charged water) is required every 12 years of Pratishta Mahotsavam of a temple. This ritual is required for rejuvenation and restoration of all the deities in the garbhagrahas in the temple complex to preserve full potency of infused power in the idols at an appropriate muhurtam on an auspicious day. New Vighrahas and additions to the temple are also consecrated at this auspicious time. This occasion also gives an opportunity renew the dedication of devotees to the temple, re-affirm their faith, and their connection to the divine Almighty Lord.

The first Kumbhabhishekam of Omaha Hindu Temple was celebrated in June 2003. We also had another kumbhabhishekam in 2004 after the completion of the Rajagopuram. The first 12-year *Maha Kumbhabhishekam* will be celebrated in the end of May 2015.

Procedures: The learned priests perform rituals to attract the divine energy into *Kumbhas*, preserve the divine energy and back to the rejuvenated idols.

In our scriptures, it is stated: ***“The Kumbha is like Bilwa phala (Bel fruit). It is radiant with its beautiful decoration of flowers and leaves. By looking at Kumbha one attains all auspicious punya and banish all papa phala. If one touches the auspicious kalasam, he/she obtains longevity, fame, and lots of wealth.”***

Planned Festivities: The festivities will start on the evening of Thursday 28th May and end at 2 pm on Sunday 31st May 2015. The initial work involves inspecting every deity and the Sanctum Sanctorum. The descendants of “Shri Vishwakarma ji” must do this. Accordingly, qualified shilpis from other temples in the United States will initiate this process in March 2015. This will be followed by the maintenance of the Sanctum, including painting, touch-ups on the marble deities, and caulking with *Ashtabandhana* to ensure a watertight seal between the vigraha (idol) and the peetam (pedestal). This is done using a special mixture containing eight special ingredients to adhere the vigraha to the peetam; indeed this paste is made by the shilpis in a special ceremony. It is believed that the proper *Ashtabandhana* using the eight special herbs mixed with wood lac, limestone powder, resin, red ochre, beeswax and butter keeps the idol rejuvenated for 12 years. However, if the *Bandhanam* is performed with gold (*Swarnabandhanam*), the rejuvenated power of the deity lasts about 100 years. Since it is nice to have these festivities more often, in our Temple we planned to perform *Ashtabandhana*.

During this period starting early March 2015, all the Utsava Murthies (surrogates of main deities) will move to a new Location (probably north west rooms) for daily pujas. Also for those deities without Utsava Murthies (Jagannath Parivar, Laxmi ji, Saraswathy ji and Navagraha), Agama Shashtra allows KALASHA to be used. Temple will never be closed. Also, since daily pujas will be performed at a new location starting early March 2015, for safety and liability reasons it is better that none of devotees go on the temple side, where maintenance work will continue.

..... Continued from page

Starting Thursday 28th May through 31st May 2015, many festivities are planned. These include: *Vedic Yagnya* (Havan), *Jeeva Kala Avahana* and *Kalasha Sthaspana*, cultural programs, and *Kumbhabhishekam*.

Estimated Cost of the Festivities: The cost for the event is estimated to be around \$200,000. Such events are considered "Sponsored Events". Since there are many festivities of so many deities, there will be an opportunity for our devotees to sponsor event(s). The Fund-raising Committee and the MK2015 committee have come up with the sponsorship of \$4,000, \$2,000, \$1,000, \$500, and \$250 for various events (details of which will be finalized and circulated by the end of January 2015). The sponsorship sheet will be placed in the hallway of the Temple early January 2015.

Historically in our Temple, all the devotees have been very generous to make all major religious events financially positive. We are hoping that this event will come out much better than earlier events.

We invite you all and look forward to your active participation (financially, mentally, physically and spiritually) in this "once-in-a-lifetime" 3-days re-vitalizing ceremony of endowing divine energy on the Vighras in the best ritualistic tradition and the spiritual growth of our temple.

May Almighty Lord Bless You All !

On behalf of the Pooja Committee and MK15 Committee

Drs. Ram Bishu and Devendra K. Agrawal



A NOTE FROM FUND RAISING CHAIRS

Blessings to all

We did have a fairly successful pledge drive on the banquet day. The total pledge amount was approximately 130,000 dollars per year for the period 2014-2016. Thanks to you all. We request you all that in order to take advantage of the tax benefit for 2014, it is better if you please send your pledge(if you have not pledged already) for this year by December 31, 2014.

When we look at the donation data for last three years' data, we realize that there are a finite proportion of donors who have not pledged on an annual basis. It is possible that a good proportion of these donors have missed because of ignorance on both sides. The fund raising committee will reach out to these families to dispel ignorance if any and to highlight all the opportunities available.

Thanks

Drs. Alekha Dash and Ram Bishu



Hindu Temple, Omaha NE (Aug 2014 thru Nov 2014)

INFLOW		OUTFLOW	
<i>Hundi collections cash</i>	\$21,950	<i>Operating expenses</i>	\$42,222
<i>Direct deposits</i>	\$7,030	<i>Staff expenses</i>	\$10,756
<i>Puja services</i>	\$34,469	<i>Priest expenses</i>	\$26,379
<i>Donations</i>	\$64,159	<i>Priest/Staff Housing</i>	\$41,350
<i>Sponsored/event donations</i>	\$45,738	<i>Other events</i>	\$45,423
<i>Raffle (after prizes, expenses)</i>	\$8917	<i>Mortgage interest</i>	\$5,081
<i>Priest/staff housing mortgage</i>	\$0	<i>Towards Mortgage/payoff</i>	\$12,235
Total inflow	\$182,263	Total outflow	\$183,445
----- Balances As of Nov 30,2014 -----			
Balance owed on Mortgage/Short-term line of credit : \$365,458			
Balance owed on priest/staff housing mortgage: \$208,460			
Operating Account Balance : \$69,025			
Savings (Endowment) balance : \$8,318			



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Ganesha

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and a

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