

# DEEPAM



## **HAPPY DEEPAVALI AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR**

**Volume 34, Deepavali Special Issue 1  
November 2024**



**Hindu Temple**

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# hindu temple Deepavali

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**NOVEMBER 9, 2024 • 3 PM**

## Raffle Prizes

1st Prize: \$1000 in cash  
2nd Prize: 65"TV (\$700)  
3rd Prize: Vitamix Blender (\$350)  
4th Prize: Apple AirPods (\$160)  
5th Prize(3 each): \$100 Indian Grocery Gift Card  
6th Prize(6 each): \$50 Indian Restaurant Gift Card  
7th Prize:(10 each): \$15 Hindu Temple Cafe Gift Card

## Raffle Contact

Alekha Dash - 402 492 9707  
Anil Bhalla - 402 333 6607  
Shantaram Joshi - 402 965 9777  
Sundar Chokkara - 402 315 0818  
Deepa Kashyap - 402 932 7395  
Chandrasekhar - 402 812 5654

Cultural Program Contact  
[cultural@htom.us](mailto:cultural@htom.us)

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1st Prize: \$1000 in cash  
2nd Prize: 65" TV (\$700)  
3rd Prize: Vitamix Blender (\$350)  
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5th Prize(3 each): \$100 Indian Grocery Gift Card  
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7th Prize:(10 each): \$15 Hindu Temple Cafe Gift Card

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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As President of the Hindu Temple, Omaha, NE, it is an honor to write on behalf of the Executive Committee for the year 2024-25. We are delighted that Deepam is being published in celebration of Deepavali, the festival of lights that signifies the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. May the beauty of Deepavali fill your homes with happiness and may the coming year bring prosperity and fulfillment.



On July 1st, we welcomed our fourth priest, Shri Jagannatha Bhattacharya, who has already proven to be an invaluable asset to our temple and community. Since then, we have joyously celebrated several festivals, including Jagannath Rath Yatra, Ganesh Chaturthi, Janmashtami, Navaratri, and Deepavali. Thanks to the unwavering dedication of our priests and the puja committee, each event was successful.

Our temple has accomplished significant projects this year. The major achievement was the completion of the community center's roofing, followed by new steps at the temple's entrance. We extend heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Sandya Saxena and Dr. Shailendra Saxena for their generous donation and completion of the outdoor lighting. We are blessed to have their support.

We are in need of new audio system for the social hall. The quote has been approved by the EC and Board and we have been working diligently with the vendor to set it up soon. Ongoing projects include the construction of the Yagna Shala, a shoe room for the Sai sanctum, window replacement in social hall, replacing LED lights in cafeteria, and a Vahana pooja shelter. We are working with the Architect for the expansion of the cafeteria kitchen. We look forward to your participation in the Maha Rudram 2025 this coming spring—details to come soon.

Spiritual activities and prayer are essential aspects of life that should be nurtured from an early age. The Bal Vihar program provides children with the education and guidance needed for this foundation. A special thank you to our dedicated volunteer teachers who make this possible.

Volunteers are the heartbeat of our community. Many devotees selflessly give their time, including running the cafeteria, driven purely by their belief in service. While you may volunteer without expecting recognition, today we want to acknowledge your dedication. Your efforts make a tangible difference, and the entire Hindu Temple community is deeply grateful. Whether you are a long-standing volunteer or new to our community, your contributions matter.

We also extend our thanks to the executive and non-executive members for their unwavering commitment to fundraising. Our priests' dedication in conducting poojas inside and outside the temple to raise funds has been exceptional. Our community is blessed with volunteers, devotees, and leaders whose service keeps our temple thriving.

We humbly ask all devotees to support the temple with generous donations. A special acknowledgment goes out to our donors, patrons, and founding members, without whom our beautiful temple—our home away from home—would not stand. I am fortunate to have an executive committee committed to serving the temple and community diligently and with dedication. Your efforts are deeply appreciated, and we are grateful for the support of Dr. Rakesh Singh, Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

Please accept our heartfelt thanks for your incredible support. We look forward to continuing the development of our beloved temple in the coming years. May Lord Prasanna Ganapathi bless us all!

**Sundar Chokkara**  
President, Executive Committee (2024-25)

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Namaskar

Let me start by wishing you a very Happy Diwali.

With the grace of Lord Prasanna Ganapati, the state of our magnificent Temple is strong, and our temple is debt-free.

All religious, spiritual, educational, and cultural activities are running smoothly due to the selfless support, dedication, and service of our Hindu devotees, volunteers, and patrons. However, we have more to do. The immediate concern is related to the infrastructure and well-being of the temple.



Most importantly, we must prepare for our next Maha Kumbhabhishekam in 2027. The whole temple must go through repair inside and out. The last time we had it was in 2015. It is typically performed every 12 years and is believed to bring blessings and prosperity to the temple and its community. We will start planning for the event, which will be a major one. We look forward to your generous support.

We will continue the Vision 2030 developed during past management. However, we should focus on sustainability and creative solutions in our day-to-day operations and long-term projects. We will pursue a respectful and collaborative working environment for future development and progress.

I must emphasize that anything we do for our Temple is a SEVA, and it has been my honor to serve at this Temple for the past several years in different capacities. Our Temple runs because of the strong devotion and selfless efforts of our volunteers, patrons, and community leaders. We greatly appreciate your generosity and outstanding services. However, we always need more.

As we celebrate our festival of lights, once again, we wish you all a happy festive season. May the divine light of Diwali spread into your life peace, prosperity, happiness, and good health forever!

**Dr. Rakesh K. Singh**  
Chairperson, Board of Trustees  
(2024-25)





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## Hindu Temple, Omaha NE (Jan 2024 - Sep 2024)

INFLOW		OUTFLOW	
Hundi Collection	\$293,444	Priest & Staff expenses	\$159,395
Private Puja Services	\$121,851	Operating Expenses	\$212,018
Direct Deposit	\$33,304	Temple Prasadam Expense	\$46,058
Other Sponsors	\$60,732	Temple Events Expenses	\$16,829
Temple Events Sponsorship	\$112,191	New Construction	\$9,000
Pledged Donations	\$3,601	Deity Jewelry	\$64,638
Temple Prasadam	\$203,142		
Temple Prasadam Sponsorship	\$30,036		
<b>Total Inflow 2024 (YTD)</b>	<b>\$858,302</b>	<b>Total outflow 2024 (YTD)</b>	<b>\$507,937</b>

### Balances As of September 2024

Total Liabilities: <b>\$0</b>
Operating Account Balance: <b>\$209,399</b>
Savings (Endowment) Balance: <b>\$524,508</b>

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Receiving Firm DTC number: **0164, Code 40**

Receiving Account title: **HINDU TEMPLE OMAHA**

Receiving Account Number: **7793-5147**

**NOTE: This is subject to change and hence please check with Temple for the latest account information.**

Then, email [htom.finance@gmail.com](mailto:htom.finance@gmail.com) with the details about your donation and contact information and with the subject line "Securities Donation" so that we can follow up to ensure a successful transfer. We generally consider the closing price of the stock on the day we have received to value your contribution. It's that easy!!

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Deepavali greetings to all  
From  
**Ramakrishnans**  
—V T, Usha, Praveen, Madan, Lauryl, Sabina, Liliana—



**HAPPY DEEPAVALI AND  
PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR**



From:  
**PURNIMA AND BABU GUDA  
RAHUL AND REEMA**



# The Essence of Diwali

Jitender Singh Deogun

Diwali signifies and commemorates the triumph of righteousness (Dharma) over evil or the knowledge of the Supreme Self over ignorance. Diwali—the festival of lights, is certainly the most celebrated and the most ancient festival of India. The term Diwali or Deepavali is derived from the Sanskrit word dipavali meaning *row of lamps or lights*. It consists of five days of religious festivities, gourmet foods, delectable sweets, and devotional worships, though there may be regional or cultural variations. It is a major religious festival celebrated by people of all religions of Indian origin including Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists.

Diwali is an ancient festival. One can imagine that Diwali perhaps evolved in the ancient mind—the mind of the ancient Rishis. The ancient Rishis contemplated and meditated for ages in search of the Supreme Lord. When the Supreme Brahman was kind, the Divine Light, the Effulgence of Brahman illumined their minds. Their ignorance was destroyed by realization of the Luminous Brahman. The illumination of the mind of the ancient Rishis with the knowledge of the Supreme, set the stage for Diwali. Irrespective of the origin of Diwali, it is a major festival for all religions of Indian origin as it has been sanctified by the Supreme Incarnations, the Tirthankaras, and the Gurus. It commemorates many events of victory of Dharma over evil in Hinduism, Sikhism and Jainism.

It is easy to see that the two principles, “*triumph of righteousness (Dharma) over evil*,” and “*triumph of the knowledge of the Supreme over ignorance*” are similar principles in essence. In the following verse,

दया धर्म का मूल है पाप मूल अभिमान  
तुलसी दया न छोड़िए जब लग घट में प्राण ।

Goswami Tulsidas says that on one side there is ego (अभिमान) that leads to evil (पाप) and on the other side there is kindness that leads to Dharma. As the Dharma leads to Self-realization, both principles are similar in essence. The essence of Diwali teaches us to work on our ego, to make

progress on self-realization and to propagate some goodness. In Vivekachoodamani, Adi Shankaracharya gives a complete understanding of ego. First, in a simple way, ego is defined as अहं, अहंता, अहंमिति, अहं कर्ता and अहं भोक्ता – “I, me, mine,” “I am the doer of my Karma,” and that “I am the reaper of the fruits of my Karma.” The fruits of Karma becomes vasanas—वासना, passions, however, if ego is conquered then vasanas become ineffective and they lose their expressive power. In Vivekachoodamani there are many slokas on ego, the following three presents a short summary of ego.

सन्त्यन्ये प्रतिबन्धाः पुंसः संसारहेतवो दृष्टाः ।

तेषामेव मूलं प्रथमविकारो भवत्यहंकारः ॥ 298 ॥

There are other obstacles also those can be observed that push men into transmigration. However, the root cause of all of them is ego “*the first modification of ignorance*.”

यो वा पुरे सोऽहमिति प्रतीतो बुद्ध्या प्रकृतस्तमसातिमूढया ।

तस्यैव निःशेषतया विनाशे ब्रह्मात्मभावः प्रतिबन्धशून्यः ॥ 301 ॥

The ego is which has been created by the intellect—the बुद्धि (Budhi) extremely deluded by ignorance or lack of awareness, and which is perceived in this body as “I am this or I am that” – when this sense of ego is annihilated, one attains an unobstructed identity with Brahman.

अहंकारग्रहान्मुक्तः स्वरूपमुपपद्यते ।

चन्द्रवद्विमलः पूर्णः सदानन्दः स्वयंप्रभः ॥ 300 ॥

In this sloka, Adi Shankaracharya says when moon is bound by the clutches of Rahu, it is eclipsed but when moon is freed, it shines again, similarly when a man is freed from the chains of the ego, he realizes his true nature, and becomes pure, limitless, ever blissful and self-luminous. Swami Vivekananda gives a deep understanding of ego in the following paragraph: “... Shri Ramakrishna. ... After twelve years the quiet prophet of Dakshineswar had worked a revolution not only in India, but in the world. The power is with the silent ones, who only live and love and then withdraw their personality. They never say “me” and “mine”; they are only blessed in being instruments. ... They are all principle, no

*Continued to the next page.....*



personality.” There is a lot to learn from the life and works of Shri Ramakrishna, they strengthen our mind and empower us to win over ego, develop humility and make progress on the path of Dharma for self-realization.

The following shloka from Shrimad Bhagavatam, makes it very clear that one must follow the Dharma and work on renunciation.

नेह यत्कर्म धर्माय न विरागाय कल्पते ॥  
न तीर्थपदसेवायै जीवन्नपि मृतोहि सः ॥

A person whose karma does not conform with his Dharma and therefore does not lead to renunciation and to the servitude of the Divine, is dead (in reality) even though he may be considered alive.

In the following shloka, Guru Nanak propagates the essence of Dharma — some of the core principles of Dharma, following which we can start on the path of Dharma and renunciation. Guru Nanak says,

बैसनो सो जिसु उपरि सुप्रसन्न ॥ बिसन को माइआ ते होइ भिन ॥  
कर्म करत होवे निहकर्म ॥ तिसु बैसनो का निरमल धर्म ॥  
काहू फल को इछा नही बाछे ॥ केवल भगति कीरतन संगि राचे ॥  
मन तन अंतरि सिमरन गोपाल ॥ सभ उपरि होवत किरपाल ॥  
आपि दिइ अवरह नाम जपावे ॥ नानक ओहु बैसनो परम गति पावे ॥२॥ (SGGS page 274.)

In this Shabad, Guru Nanak talks about a true devotee and instructs us how a true devotee lives (or should live) his life. First line: a true Vaishnaav — a true devotee, is the one with whom God is Supremely pleased (सुप्रसन्न). He lives a pious life that is indifferent and detached from Maya. Guru Nanak further says, he does (must do) his karma but becomes selfless and altruistic (निहकर्म, निष्कामी) and develops a sense of I am not the doer (न अहं कर्ता), that Vaishnaav, that devotee have a pious Dharma. The devotee renounces all desires and hopes of all fruits of his pious Karma (न अहं भोक्ता) and he is always absorbed in devotional worship and the singing of Kirtan of the Parbrahm's Glories. Within his mind and body, he meditates on Gopal's Naam and he is kind (कृपाल) to all creatures. He is steadfast in meditating on Naam and inspires others to

meditate. O Nanak, such a Vaishnaav, such a devotee, is truly self-realized, he becomes a liberated (जीवन मुक्त) sage.

Isha Upanishad is one of the smallest Upanishads with only 18 short 2-line mantras like the one given below except may be one that may need three lines. The Isha Upanishad is so full of philosophy that we must try to understand Swami Chinmayananda's comments about the first mantra in his own word, “The very first stanza of this matchless [Isha] Upanishad is in itself a miniature philosophical textbook. Besides being comprehensive in its enunciation of Truth, it provides a vivid exposition of the technique of realising the Truth in a language unparalleled in philosophical beauty and literary perfection....”

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥ १ ॥

All the creation in this empirical universe, mobile or immobile, from the Pataal Lok (पाताल लोक) to the Sat Lok (सत्य लोक), and every particle, all space must be manifested and transcended by Ish (ईश)—the Supreme Brahman. Attain self-realization and earn its bliss by renunciation of the egoistic life and worldly pleasures and desires. Do not covet the wealth of anyone.

In the following verse, Guru Nanak says,

एकं क्लृप्तं त सख देवा देव देवा त आत्मह ॥

आत्मं सी बासुदेवसु जे कोई जानसि भेव ॥

नानक ता को दासु है सोई निरंजन देव ॥४॥ (SOOS pp. 1353)

GuruNanak says: there is One Krishnam—the One Supreme Self (परमात्मा), the Nirankar Prabhu and He is the Atman (आत्मा) of all, of all the Deities and the Deity of all Deities. And Atman is the Shri Basvdevsa—the One Supreme Self (परमात्मा). The Self always has been the eternal Consciousness. If one understands this secret, he is self-realized, he is the Supreme Self, Guru Nanak says, and I am his devotee in servitude.

This Diwali, shouldn't we all light a little lamp of self-realization?

**Acknowledgements:** In addition to study of Hindu and Sikh Scriptures, the author benefited greatly from many books and websites especially for adopting translation of Sanskrit and Punjabi verses.



## **Deepavali Wishes**

**From:**

**Naresh and Meera Dewan  
Tina and Sajan Mahajan,  
Anya and Avik  
Vinay Dewan  
Taruna Walia**



**On this auspicious occasion  
of Deepavali, may our life be  
filled with joy and success.**

**“Wish you a Happy  
Deepavali”**

**From:**

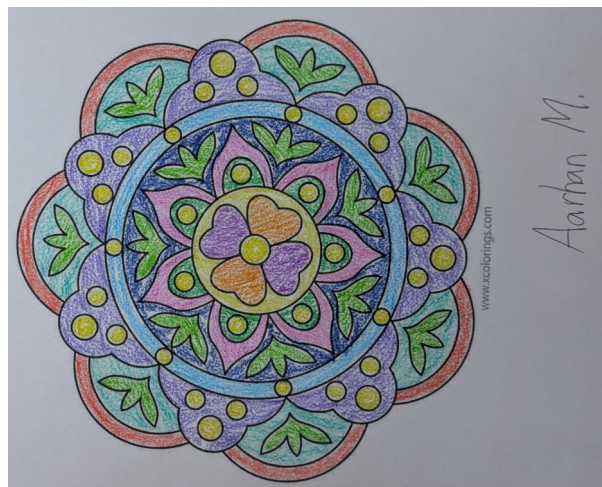
***Sree, Ambika, Isabella Surya,  
Sinjin Gopal Nair,  
Anjana and Ajay Varma***



## Balvihar Activities and Learning







## Balvihar Activities by Kids

## Balvihar Message

Diwali or Deepavali, the Festival of Lights, holds immense cultural and spiritual significance for the Indian diaspora. Celebrated across religious traditions, including Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism, Diwali symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. For Hindus, it commemorates Lord Rama's return to Ayodhya after a 14-year exile and his victory over the demon king Ravana, signifying the restoration of righteousness. It also honors Goddess Lakshmi, the deity of wealth and prosperity, whose blessings are sought for a prosperous year.

For the Indian diaspora, Diwali carries deep meaning, serving as a time to reconnect with cultural heritage and shared traditions despite geographical distances. The festival fosters a sense of belonging and community through rituals like lighting diyas, exchanging sweets, and participating in prayers and festivities. It's also a time for self-reflection and renewal, emphasizing the importance of family bonds, generosity, and the spiritual purification of both spaces and hearts. In modern contexts, Diwali celebrations often become a platform to share and introduce Indian cultural values to wider communities, bridging cultural divides while maintaining the essence of age-old practices. For many, it's not just a celebration but a reaffirmation of identity and values passed down through generations.

Balvihar Omaha's mission is for children in the Indian community to have a chance to learn about the Hindu traditions, its philosophy and culture. Throughout the year, kids engage in learning and celebrating various Hindu festivals from different parts of India. This year the kids celebrated Diwali by participating in making paper lanterns and coloring the earthen diyas and coloring artwork. Their work is displayed in the temple hallway. Additionally, the kids participated in the temple's annual Diwali program. They enacted scenes from the Ramayana and also depicted the various forms of Goddess Durga.

Balvihar is run and managed by volunteers and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in this endeavor. Balvihar family conveys everyone in the community a very happy, healthy Diwali and a prosperous New Year!

**Ramakrishna Prasad**  
Chair, Education Committee







**Happy DEEPAVALI and Prosperous  
NEW YEAR**

From:

**Sundar Chokkara**

**Geeta Chokkara**

**Sukarn Chokkara**

**Sumeet Chokkara**



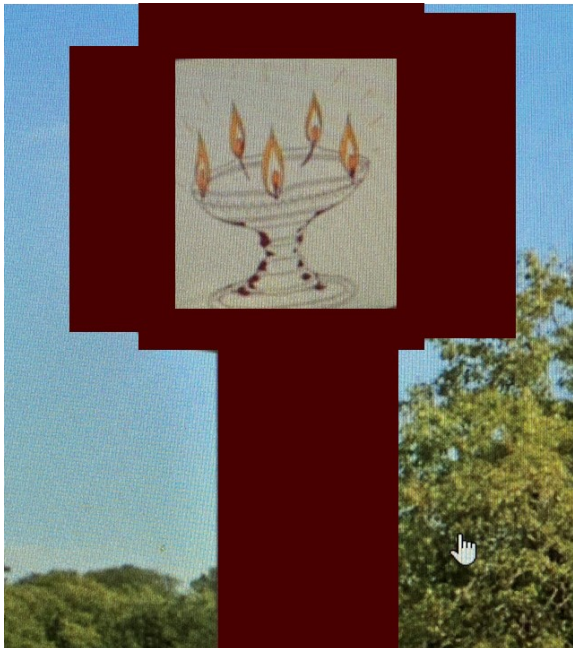


## ***Shubh Diwali, Full of Lights, Joys & Peace***



From:

**K. Creative Hands Event Planning**  
**Anil, Kusum, Anuj, Priya, and Arjun Bhalla**



From:

**Phani Tej Adidam**  
**Kranti Adidam**  
**Keshav Adidam**  
**Ishani Adidam**  
**Hamsini Adidam**







## Navratri & Devi Jagran 2024



## Importance of Gunas: by Sean Bradrick

The gunas, like the bodily doshas, are all in a constant state of flux or change. Blown by the wind, so to speak. The unmodified normative state of the mind is most chaotic under continuous impressions coming in through the senses. The mind itself is the sixth sense and is a culmination of these impressions.

In the state of deep sleep and through pratyahara (internalization of the senses), the mental stillness of dhyana can be achieved in the awakened state but not for very long. Most will not experience this in their lifetimes. The closest thing may be when we're reading or driving and space out for a few minutes. When this happens, we snap out of it and can't remember these lost moments. We find ourselves having to go back a few pages in that novel.

What does not change along with the motions of living in the world of maya, is the Self. Seeing a bottle break does not shatter the eyes, and the atma is unaffected by the imposition of foreign stimuli and the compulsion of thought.

*The transcendent one who neither hates or desires the presence or absence of joyful illumination, material attachment, or delusion. One who remains steady or undisturbed by constant changes and transformations of the gunas, and simply says only the gunas are changing.* ~Bhagavad Gita 4.22-23

The mouth experiences the water element with taste. The nose experiences the earth element by smell. The ears experience ether through sound. The skin feels wind/air through the sense of touch, and the eyes perceive fire by sight.

The akasha in motion becomes wind/air, a principle of movement. The vayu creates friction and fire. The agni melds into water. Apah (water) brings molecules together to form prithvi, the earth element.

The body complex is made up of these five gross elements, and the mind consists of subtle forms of the elements. Ojas (water) provides mental immunity or resilience. Tejas (fire) provides intellect and comprehension. Prana (air) provides mental vibrancy.

These are important Vedic, yogic, and ayurvedic concepts. We must have ojas for a stable mind and strong body. We must have tejas for proper metabolism and to process ideas, memories, and emotions. We must have prana to be mobile, flexible, and to fuel the body-mind complex. These three subtle doshas must be purified, strengthened, and balanced; and they can be qualified by the gunas. Ojas relates to tamas, tejas to rajas, and prana to sattva.

To manage our ojas, tejas, and prana can be done by simply understanding a fundamental rule of Ayurveda: Like attracts like and opposites detract from one another. To increase ojas, we need rest, stillness, and a nutritious diet. To increase tejas, we need mental stimulation, an inquiring mind, and physical exercise. To increase prana, we need only observe a prana-rich diet and tend to our yogic breathing or pranayama practice. I encourage the reader to delve into various other ways to purify, increase, and balance these three most important life principles for themselves.

The syllables of AUM are also related to these metaphysical doshas. The A- sound to ojas, the U- sound to tejas, the M- sound to prana. Conversely, the A- sound relates to water & earth, the U- sound to fire, the M- sound to air, and the fourth silent syllable of AUM- to space or ether.

Remember, the first Hindu deities were elemental and/or related specifically to nature: Indra to storms, Surya to the sun, Vayu to wind, Agni to fire, and Varuna to water. Think of yajna/homam, the Vedic fire ceremony. We have the clay structure around the fire and the offerings of grains, ghee, dahi, etc. These come from the earth. The agnihotra features the fire, which is considered to be the mouth of god. When the offering of earth and water are placed into the fire they transform into smoke, wind, and ether.

All these things: Impressions, thoughts, sensory stimuli, the doshas, the elements, tissues, the motor organs, moods, actions/reactions, and all else can be qualified by the gunas sattva, rajas, and tamas. Sattva is purity and stillness. It is related to the akasha or element of space. Tamas is inertia, stability, and resistance. It is related to the earth element. Rajas is kinetic energy and is dual. It drifts into both the sattva-guno and the tamas-guno. It is related to air. Sattva guna brings bliss. Rajas guna brings material happiness and pleasure. Tamas brings rest.

This shows the value in understanding the form and function of the gunas, Sankhya darshana, and Vedanta. Even Bhagavan Krishna tells Arjuna not to so freely share his teachings with those who are unaware of the workings of the gunas.

*“Those who are sincere but are unaware of the distorting effects of the gunas continue to act by compulsion. Therefore, those who do understand should be careful in educating those who do not yet understand, so that the necessary actions and responsibilities of their lives are not disrupted.”* ~Bhagavad Gita 3.29

*Sean Bradrick, is an Ayurvedic yoga teacher & author of the soon-to-be released A Hindus Guide to Advocacy & Activism, living in Omaha Nebraska, USA.*

# Opinion | Shiva: Destroyer or Restorer?

Having been a Western Shaivite and Shakta for a few decades and a former Catholic, complete with my silly white man *trishula* and Kali tattoos, I have regularly been asked by non-Hindu family, friends, and random strangers why I worship destroyer deities. I have even been asked why I worship demons. I do not blame Abrahamic dualists for their concerns, as these are simply byproducts of their religious upbringing and monocultural conditioning. Since I have been both a Christian

and an adherent of *Vedic darshana*, I view these inquiries as an opportunity to educate and open the minds of whoever may truly be interested in hearing from a *Dharmika*, rather than from their priest or pastor. Non-Hindus and Hindus alike are not immune to being conditioned to the 'this is all good and that is all bad' perception. The follow-



ing is how I tend to explain these matters to those who may be caught up in dualistic thinking.

The Hindu deity Shiva is known as the destroyer. Some in the West and the East for that matter, misunderstand this out of ignorance and sometimes, bigotry. What is needed today is comprehension and compassion. We all must at least begin to see beyond the illusions of separation. We must be able to wrap our heads around allegory and find union in notions and attitudes which seem to be at odds, but ultimately complement one another.

The Abrahamic deity is most often seen simply as the creator. This deity killed over 300 million people as per the Old Testament, sent and continues to send the majority of people to an eternal hell at the time of their deaths, and flooded the Earth. So this deity is himself quite destructive out of vice.

Hindus have a destroyer god who destroys not arbitrarily or out of spite but out of necessity. It's only logical. Creation cannot stand on its own in any aspect of life. There is always creation, preservation and transformation. There is always the past, present, and future. This is true on a cellular, ecological, and cosmological level.

*Continued to the next page.....*



We must consume food in order to survive. Food is created. We must ingest food matter. It must be assimilated for its nutrients to be preserved in our tissues. What is not assimilated must be eliminated. Even every cell of our body is in time, a new regenerated cell. Without ingestion, we starve. If we cannot assimilate food, we become emancipated and die. If we cannot eliminate it, we become toxic and die. What we call 'waste' has its purpose. It breaks down back into the elements where the food cycle begins again. There is no structure without a function.

So, destruction is an important part of creation. Hindus believe all of creation is an extension and reflection of *Brahmaan*. So 'God' in Hinduism is Creator, Sustainer and Transformer. G = Generator, O = Operator, D = Destroyer. It's just a Good Orderly Direction.

The word 'destroyer' is a bit of a misnomer. In the West, it has negative connotations and of course, anything with a negative connotation that is associated with the divine is misunderstood as being backwards, demonic, or dangerous.

Some adherents of the Abrahamic faiths like to say Shiva and Kali must be some sort of devils, because they are referred to as the God and Goddess of destruction and because they carry a *trishula* or trident. The Bible and the Quran offer little to no description of what demons look like. Some people have simply seen too many cartoons. When they see a depiction of Kali Maa or Bhairava, they tend to become frightened. Many Hindus too might be, in a sense, terrified.

Certainly, Kali and Bhairava worship is something quite serious. Ultimately, however, we know that Kali is as kind as time (kaal/kala) which heals all wounds. Bhairava is the annihilator of fear, greed, lust, and anger. He is not simply a 'destroyer' but at the same time, a restorer. Of course, as devotees, we know that Shiva is the most kind, compassionate and thoughtful deity, as his name implies. 'Siva' means kind, benevolent, benign, and gracious.

Referring to Mahadeva simply as a 'destroyer' is limiting. A more appropriate word may be 'transcend-er'. Nothing is ever destroyed completely. Matter breaks down into energy. Energy can only be transformed, not destroyed. To the Shiva/Shaktas, Shiva is the creator, preserver, and destroyer. Other sampradayas do not agree. No matter. Hindus should know that religion is not a competition. There exists Harihara, a deity known more in ancient times than today, who is both Shiva and Vishnu. So, no real need to reconcile Shaivism and Vaishnavism.

At the end of the day, destruction breeds creation. We can see in Hindu philosophies some talk of karma and reincarnation. Some are deistic and others are non-theistic. We can see the functions of tri-dev (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva) in both the spiritual and material worlds, and we can see the same in what the Hindu sages have said on the topic of karma and reincarnation.

As many ways as action can take place, is karma in one form or another. Every action has a certain reaction no matter if we understand it or not. No matter our particular belief system. Every cause has an effect. This is true with astronomy, physics, biology, psychology and neuroscience.

Reincarnation? All of nature is a part of an observable cycle that returns to itself upon its death where growth begins again. We are a part of that nature and growth.

By **Sean Bradrick**

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## Ram Navami Puja - 2024



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Deepavali Greetings

From:

**Prem and  
Kanta Arora**





## **Durga Puja 2024 by Bengali Samiti of Nebraska**





## Deepavali Wishes

From:

**Dr. Shailendra Saxena & Dr. Sandhya Saxena  
And Family**







## **Velan Kaavadi - 2024**





# **Happy Deepavali and Prosperous New Year**

FROM:

***Dr. Sanjay Singh  
Vandana & Yutika Singh***







Hindu Temple Limited, 13010 Arbor Street, Omaha, NE 68144, (402) - 697-8546

**hindu temple**  
Omaha, Nebraska

# Ram Mandir RATH YATRA

**Thursday May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024**  
**12:20 pm to 1:05pm**



**Please join us in receiving the  
blessings of  
RAM LALLA FROM AYODHYA**

Shri Ram Lalla Pratikriti (replica) will arrive in our  
Temple for a very brief period (45 minutes only)

Pujit Akshat from the Prana Pratishtha ceremony  
in Ayodhya will be showered on the devotees

**Please don't miss this rare opportunity**

**Jai Shri Ram!!!**



## **VCN Events**

**Every year several spiritual scholars both from India as well as from the US visits and provides education on spiritual awareness.**

**Continued to the next page.....**



**Vedantic Center of Nebraska  
at Hindu Temple, Omaha, NE**

In collaboration with  
**Dharma Poshanam**

Discourse on  
**Paradoxical Patterns of  
Vedanta in Daily Life**

How can Vedanta be applied to contemporary issues and daily challenges? Are there contradictions or paradoxes?

**Brahmasri Dr. Vamshi Krishna Ghanapathi**  
Avadhoota Datta Peetham, Mysore, India

**July 27, 2024**  
**SATURDAY AT 10:00 AM TO 11:30 AM**  
at  
**Temple Social Hall**





**Every year several  
spiritual scholars both  
from India as well as from  
the US visits and  
provides education on  
spiritual awareness.**



**Continued to the next page.....**



# VCN Events



## **Naada Yoga: Soulful Strings – Lecture Demonstration**


**Sri G. Vignesh Shankar, Guitar**  
**Sri Ganesh Kumar, Kanjira and Konnakol**  
**Sri Sarvesh Shankar, Ghatam**

---

**Venue: HINDU TEMPLE Social Hall**  
**May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Saturday – 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm**

**Donations requested:**  
\$200 (Grand donor)  
\$100 (Patron)  
\$50 (Benefactor)  
\$20 (Supporter)

Please write checks in the name of  
“Hindu Temple Omaha”



**Please feel to contact:**  
**Dr. Phani Tej Adidam**  
Chair, VCN

[padidam@unomaha.edu](mailto:padidam@unomaha.edu)



Continued to the next page.....





Vedantic Center of Nebraska  
and  
Telugu Samiti of Nebraska  
cordially invite you to

**BHAGAVADGITA**  
Enlightenment with Musical Entertainment  
For World Peace - 2024 USA

by Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee  
Brahmasri **Dr. L.V. GANGADHARA SASTRY**  
Singer, Preacher, Propagator of Bhagavadgita  
Founder & Chairman of Bhagavadgita Foundation

**Venue**  
Hindu Temple Social Hall  
13010 Arbor St  
Omaha, NE 68144

**Date & Time**  
Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept  
at 3 PM CST

- Donors are welcomed
- No entry fee, open for all
- Program followed by snacks

To host Gita Gana Pravachanams in USA  
Contact Viswateja : +1(904)649-0664  
[www.bhagavadgitafoundation.org](http://www.bhagavadgitafoundation.org)



Every year several spiritual scholars both from India as well as from the US visits and provides education on spiritual awareness.



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CELEBRATING

3<sup>RD</sup>



ANNIVERSARY

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AND CUSTOMERS!  
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**Shri Venkat Suman Maddula**



**Shri Hari Sambath**



**Shrimati Hema Santhanam**



**Shrimati Smrati Jain**

**Thank You Outstanding Cafeteria Volunteers. You have been consistently supporting for last 3 years to help in the success of our cafeteria.**

# Temple Tours

< Visit Omaha recognized...



- We are continuing to provide Temple tours to educate the community about Sanatha Dharma.
- Vice President of Visit Omaha visited our temple .

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Omaha Visitors Center • 306 S 10th St • Omaha, NE 68102 • 402.444.7762

August 28, 2024

Ambika Nair  
Hindu Temple  
13010 Arbor Street  
Omaha, NE 68144

Dear Ambika,

On behalf of Visit Omaha, thank you for your continued partnership.

As the city's official tourism authority, Visit Omaha is committed to promoting visitation through innovative destination marketing, extensive industry experience, and strong partnerships with local tourism stakeholders.

The Hindu Temple in Omaha is an example of one such collaboration. Its authentic, hand-crafted architecture offers group tour and leisure visitors a unique glimpse into Hindu cultural expression, beautifully highlighting the diversity and richness of Omaha's cultural landscape.

We are delighted to feature the Hindu Temple as an attraction and look forward to our continued partnership.

Best regards,

Deborah Ward  
Executive Director  
Visit Omaha





## Hinduism and Sustainability: Ancient Wisdom for a Modern World

Hinduism, one of the world's oldest religions, offers a profound and timely perspective on sustainability. Its teachings emphasize the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of living in harmony with nature. In a world grappling with environmental challenges, these ancient principles provide valuable guidance for creating a sustainable future. Hinduism's reverence for nature is deeply rooted in its understanding of the five elements (Pancha Mahabhuta) and their divine significance.

- **Prithvi (Earth):** The Earth is seen as the mother goddess, Bhumi Devi, who nourishes and sustains all life. This fosters a deep respect for the land and its resources, encouraging sustainable practices of agriculture and resource management.
- **Jal (Water):** Water, particularly rivers like the Ganges, is considered sacred and purifying. This reverence promotes the conservation of water bodies and highlights the importance of keeping them clean and unpolluted.
- **Agni (Fire):** Fire represents transformation and purification. It is used in rituals and ceremonies, symbolizing the burning away of impurities and the renewal of life. This element reminds us of the power of nature and the importance of respecting its forces.
- **Vayu (Air):** Air is the breath of life, essential for all living beings. Hinduism emphasizes the importance of clean air and the connection of all beings through the air we breathe. This encourages practices that minimize air pollution and promote a healthy atmosphere.

**Akasha (Space):** Space represents the boundless expanse where everything exists. It signifies interconnectedness and the underlying unity of all creation. This understanding fosters a sense of responsibility towards the environment and the need to preserve the delicate balance of the world.

By recognizing the divine presence within these elements, Hinduism encourages a deep respect for nature and promotes sustainable practices that ensure the well-being of the planet and all its inhabitants.

### Hinduism's Principles of Sustainability

- **Reverence for Mother Nature:** Hinduism views nature as sacred, imbued with divine presence. Mountains, rivers, forests, and animals are worshipped and considered manifestations of the divine. This reverence fosters a deep respect for the environment and encourages responsible stewardship.
- **Concept of Dharma:** Dharma, often translated as "duty" or "righteous conduct," emphasizes fulfilling one's role in maintaining cosmic order. This includes ecological dharma, a responsibility to protect and preserve the environment for present and future generations.
- **Karma and Reincarnation:** The law of karma, where actions have consequences, and the cycle of rebirth, highlights the interconnectedness of all beings across time. This understanding encourages long-term thinking and consideration for the impact of our actions on future generations and the environment.

**Vegetarianism:** A significant portion of Hindus practice vegetarianism, adhering to the principle of ahimsa (non-violence). Reducing meat consumption is recognized as a crucial step towards mitigating environmental impact and promoting sustainable food systems.

By: *Ganesh Naik*



**Very Happy Deepavali Wishes**

**From:**

**Dr. Rajeswar Rao**

**Lakshmi Rao**

**Kishore Rao, Dr. Smriti**

**Prashant, Savitha, and Krithika**

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## **Temple Volunteers Participating at Market to Market race raised \$700 to the temple**

# MAHARUDRAM

## SAVE THE DATE (APRIL 25-27, 2025)

### HINDU TEMPLE OMAHA



OM NAMA SHIVAYA  
SHIVAYA NAMA OM

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF SRI MAHA RUDRAM

**Sri Rudram** chant is an ancient Vedic hymn in praise of Lord Shiva, and is the oldest prayer with a listing of various names of Lord Shiva. Through the chanting of Sri Rudram, Lord Shiva's various attributes and aspects are invoked and worshipped. Chanting the Rudram is considered to be of great benefit. Sage Yagyavalkya, in JABALA UPANISHAD, when asked to name one hymn that bestows all prosperity to devotees, he replied 'SHATA RUDRAM'

**Sri Rudram** – Comprising of Namakam and Chamakam Srirudram, is also known as Rudraprasna. **It is part of the Yajur Veda and one of the greatest of the Vedic hymns for all round benefits of mankind and is known to remove all doshas and difficulties.**

The first part, chapter 16 of the Yajurveda, is known as Namakam because of the repeated use of the word "Namo" in it. The second part, chapter 18 of the Yajurveda, is known as chamakam because of the repeated use of the words "Chame".

**Scriptures define several methods of Rudram recitation. Those are Rudram, Ekadasha Rudram, Maha Rudram and Ati Rudram – each being more potent than the preceding one.**

1. Reciting the entire Sri Rudram – 11 Anuvakas (chapters) of Namakam once followed by 11 Anuvakas of Chamakam, is the most common method practised in day- to- day worship (during Monday Abhishekam to Lord Shiva in our temple).
2. Reciting Namakam 11 times followed by first, second canto of Chamakam for each Namakam recitation is known as Rudraikadasini (Ekadasha Rudram) (We do this on Sivarathri day).
3. Eleven Rudraikadasini make one Laghu Rudram (121 times recitation). This is usually done by 11 priests each chanting Rudram 11 times simultaneously.
4. **Eleven Laghu Rudrams make one Maha Rudram (1,331 times). This what we want to do next year April 25-27**

**This grand 3-days long Vedic ceremony is for Loka Kalyana, the welfare of all devotees, their families, all humanity and for Universal peace and prosperity.**



# STATE OF NEBRASKA



## Proclamation

WHEREAS,

*Diwali is celebrated by lighting the Diya, or oil lamp, which symbolizes dispelling darkness and bringing light into life with traditional offerings, rituals, and festivals; and*

WHEREAS,

*Diwali is a festival of lights that includes many traditions such as gathering with friends and family for community prayer, exchanging gifts, setting off fireworks, and decorating houses with colorful rangolis; and*

WHEREAS,

*Diwali is also the Hindu New Year, and it is celebrated on the last day of the last month in the lunar calendar; and*

WHEREAS,

*For Hindus, Diwali is celebration of good triumphing over evil, and that light will prevail over darkness; and*

WHEREAS,

*For Sikhs, Diwali is the day on which the sixth founding Sikh guru, Guru Hargobind, was released from confinement by the Mughal Emperor Jehangir; and*

WHEREAS,

*For Jains, Diwali symbolizes Lord Mahavira attainment of Nirvana; and*

WHEREAS,

*For Buddhists, Diwali represents the day Emperor Ashoka chose the peaceful path of Buddhism over destruction and carnage; and*

WHEREAS,

*Diversity represents one of our greatest strengths, and the State of Nebraska joins with all those around the world celebrating Diwali.*

NOW, THEREFORE,

*I, Jim Pillen, Governor of the State of Nebraska, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM the week of October 28 – November 2, 2024, as*

### DIWALI WEEK


*in Nebraska, and I do hereby urge all citizens to take due note of this observance.*

*IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand, and cause the Great Seal of the State of Nebraska to be affixed this nineteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-four.*

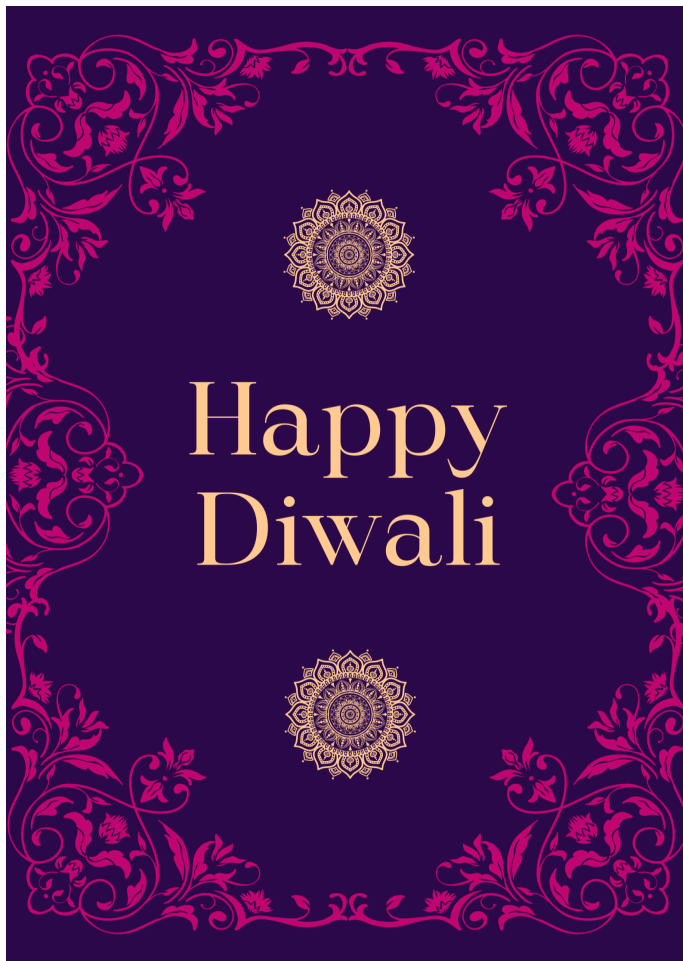


Attest:

  
Secretary of State

  
Governor





Best Wishes and  
Happy Diwali  
From:  
**Smita and Alekha  
Dash  
Rohan Dash  
Debleena, Ajay,  
Sarika & Sahil  
Saini**

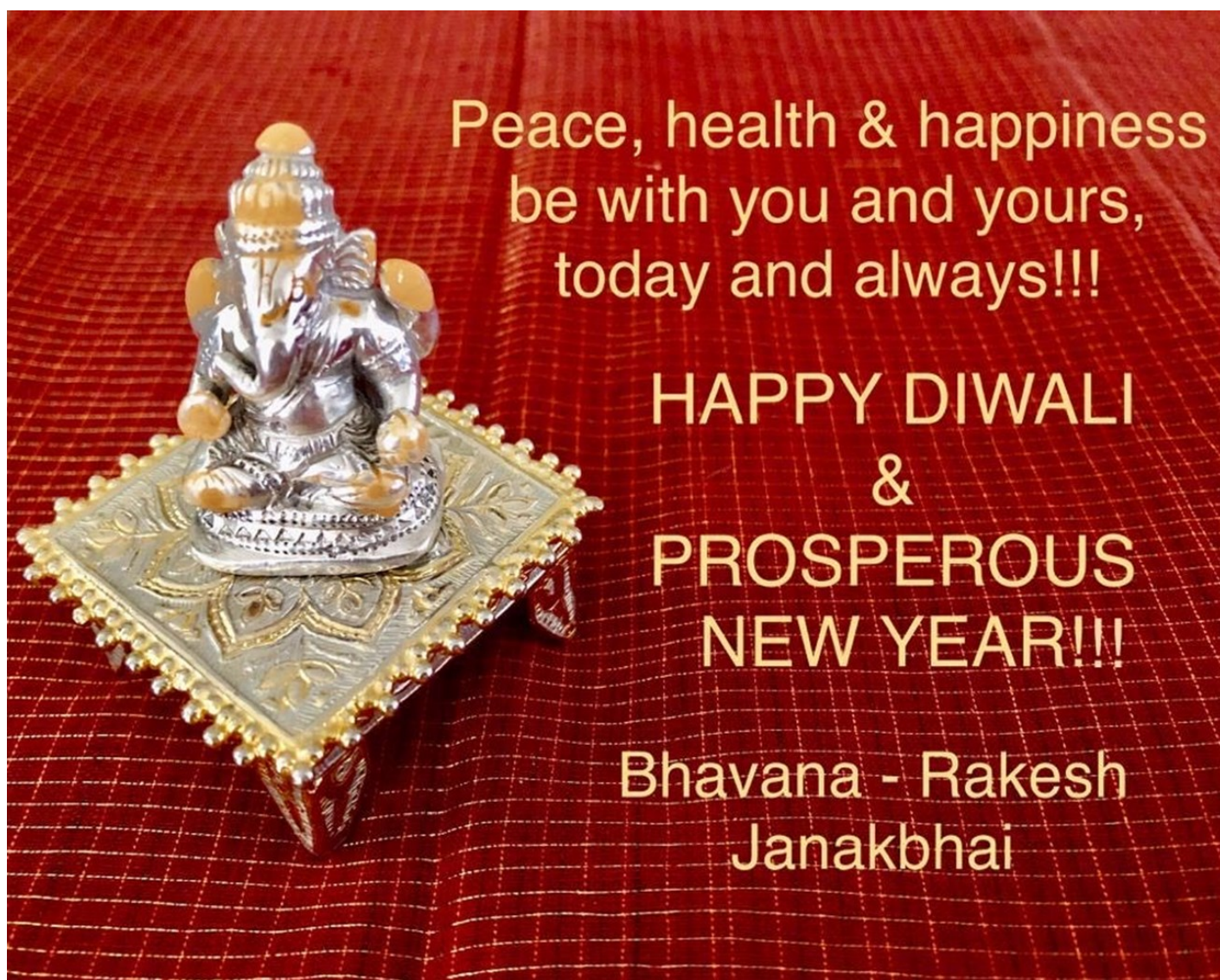






## Mahashivratri Puja - 2024





Peace, health & happiness  
be with you and yours,  
today and always!!!

HAPPY DIWALI  
&  
PROSPEROUS  
NEW YEAR!!!

Bhavana - Rakesh  
Janakbhai







Happy Deepavali Wishes

From:

**Saraswathi G. Joshi & Family**  
**Sumangala and Shantaram Joshi**  
**Deepa, Nikhil and Juhi Kumar**  
**Yashaswini K. Joshi & Family**



**Wishing You All**  
**A Very Happy**  
**Deepavali**

From:

**Jitender and Ravinder Deogun**



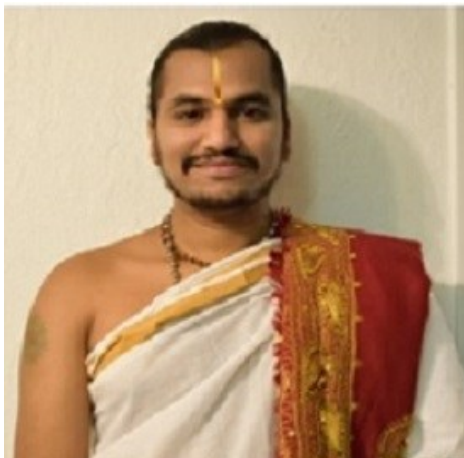
# **Please Join Us in Saying “Thank You” to Our Priests and Facility Manager**



**Pandit Nagabhat Vidyashankar**  
**Priest, Hindu Temple**



**Pandit Badari Narayana**  
**Priest, Hindu Temple**



**Pandit Laxmikant Kulkarni**  
**Priest, Hindu Temple**



**Pandit Jagannatha Bhaktavatsala**  
**Priest, Hindu Temple**



**Shri Chandrasekhar Karmegam**  
**Facility Manager, Hindu Temple**





**JAGANNATHA  
BHAKTAVATSALA**

**Meet Our Priest, Sri Jagannatha**

We are honored to introduce **Sri Jagannatha**, our esteemed priest from Bangalore, Karnataka, India. He began his service at this temple in **June 2024** and brings with him **over 15 years of experience** in performing religious duties and guiding the spiritual well-being of his community.

Before joining our temple, Sri Jagannatha served as the **Head Priest (Pradhana Archaka)** at the Shree Bhoo Neela Sametha Venkateshwara Swamy Temple in Bangalore for over **12 years**. He is part of a **traditional priest family** and proudly represents the **9th generation** in his lineage.

Sri Jagannatha holds a **Pancharatra Agama Praveena** degree from Mysore University, which has provided him with deep knowledge in Vedic scriptures and Hindu rituals. He also pursued **Krishna Yajurveda studies** under the guidance of his uncle, Devaraja Bhattar.

He is highly skilled and trained in performing a variety of religious services, including **Abhishekam, Alankaram, Kumbabishekam, Gruhapravesham, Satyanarayana Puja, Sudarshana Homam, Navagraha Puja, Kalyanotsavam, Namakaranam, Annaprashanam, and Ayushya Homam**, among others.

Sri Jagannatha is fluent in **English, Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit**. He is married with two children and remains committed to promoting Hindu traditions, sharing his profound knowledge in the **Vedas, Upanishads**, and other sacred texts.

With a passion for spiritual service and cultural heritage, Sri Jagannatha continues to inspire and guide our community through his dedicated service.

Phone:(407)920-8627, Email:Jaganomaha@outlook.com

# Editor's Corner

"It is my great pleasure to bring the 2024 Deepavali special issue of Deepam to you all. We have included the useful updates and details of the major events such as Deepavali Puja, messages from our leaders, Deepavali greetings from our community members, a brief reports on Balvihar activities and upcoming major events/pujas of 2024. We thank all the devotees for their continued support of Deepam.

In this special issue, we have included an updated donors list as of September 30, 2024, including donors who have donated over \$3,000 donation to the temple since its inception. We sincerely thank all the donors for their generous contribution. If there is any error in the amount we have listed, please contact Shri Venkatesh Bettadapura or Shri Sundar Chokkara. Please help temple to grow by giving your precious time, effort, constructive criticism and generous donation.

We also want to thank all the advertisers for their support of this publication. We invite you all to consider contributing articles for publication in the quarterly Deepam issues. Articles from young adults are also welcome and I request the parents to encourage their children to contribute their articles. I look forward to your suggestions to improve the Deepam.

I also take this opportunity to thank the members of Publication Advisory Committee for their help in bringing this special issue. We also want to thank the Printing Facility, Creighton University for this publication.

Wishing you all a **"Very Happy Deepavali and Prosperous New Year 2024"**

**Nagendra Chaturvedi, Editor**

*on behalf of Publication Committee*

*Hindu Temple*



**Very Happy Deepavali Wishes**

**From:**

**SAWHNEY FAMILY**

**Harish and Shobha,**

**Angeli, Akash, Aria & Ayaan**

**Meghna and Amit**



## 2024 Outstanding Volunteers of Hindu Temple, Omaha



**Shri Surendra Khandavalli**



**Shrimati Purnima Singh**



**Shrimati Karuna Rasineni**

**THANK YOU**  
**volunteers for your**  
**dedication and**  
**commitment for last**  
**several years**

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**HAPPY DEEPAVALI**



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धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः। : A popular Sanskrit phrase from Manusmiriti – it means “Dharma protects the protector”



**Happy Deepavali to You All  
From Hindu Temple, Omaha NE**

