

LETTER FROM THE BOARD

O...M...Shree Ganeshaya Namaha.....Journey of our soul started many moons ago. We are freezing this moment in the universal clock to take a snap shot of where we are.....wondering who we are.....where we came from.....and where we are going ? Studies, practice and understanding of Shastras.....Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Bhagavatam, Mahabharat, Ramayan and Shrimad Bhagawad Gita may bring some understating of these difficult questions. The answer will be different for each soul as journey is quiet unique for each one of us.

On this journey, we have paused and formed an organization called Sanatan Hindu Sanskar Kendra here in Lafayette, Louisiana in August 2013. Our goal is to purchase a track of land and build a Temple of God where we can perform our spiritual activities, find solace and peace within. Activities such as puja, archana, abhishekam, aarati, meditation, ashtang yoga, singing bhajans, chanting shlokas, stuties, stotras, nam smaranam, teaching and learning of vedic scriptures, purna vidya classes, teaching and learning of Indian languages such as sanskrit, hindi, gujarati, telugu, etc, Indian music classes, learn to play instruments such as harmonium, tabla, etc. learn singing, dance classes of bharat natyam and kutchipudi, drama, natak, and many more activities can be performed at this center.

As of today we have 64 members, 7 of whom are life members, few of them have pledged to support further for purchase of land and building a temple. Life members and Donors of \$25,000 and larger amounts are proposed to be the trustees of this organization. A small group of volunteers including current board members are working very hard to purchase a land by the end of this year. A volunteer architect has prepared a preliminary beautiful layout of a temple facility which can be modified to fit our needs and shape of the land. There is an expert group of IT folks volunteering their services to build a wonderful web-site "Sanatanlft.org". Check it out to monitor our progress. Soon, we will start posting our weekly spiritual activities. We have held three public sessions to get the message out to the Indian community at large and plan to continue the same over coming months. A regular weekly meeting is held to capture the progress and plan of upcoming activities to include - select, go and look at lands, go visit other similar temple projects, etc.

This is a long journey, difficult and a serious one. We are fully dedicated to give it all we have, to make it happen. We seek your full support and blessings. We are actively seeking volunteers for several committees. Your donation in form of money, land, pledges, your services, in any and all form, will be greatly welcomed and appreciated. Send us your blessings, comments, thoughts, your donations, your monetary pledges, and your pledge of voluntary services via email to shskendra@gmail.com or feel free to call us. This is your/our project and together we will make it happen. Where there is a will.....there is a way. At the lotus feet of shree lord Krishna.....

O...m...tat...sat...iti

Jay Patel

Volunteers

Volunteers needed to support SHSK activities. Current opportunities include Editor for SHSK monthly Newsletter (Vedanshi). Members can also sent a spiritual short story or short biography of famous personalities.

Volunteers needed to lead the SHSK events committee. This committee will be responsible to organize SHSK fundraising events.

Volunteers are also needed to lead the media committee. This committee is responsible to capture SHSK events through video and photography and share it to SHSK supporters through website, email and social media (Facebook, Google+).



SHSK would like to thank Alok Banga to volunteer his time and expertise on finding appropriate land for the temple. Would also like to thank Rani Chandra to volunteer her efforts in the layout and planning for temple infrastructure.

SHSK would like to thank the following members who volunteered to lead website committee. Prasanth Chintamaneni, Kannappan Periathamby, Uttam Nalla, Shravan Ramaram and Swaroopa Ambatipati.

There will be many more opportunities to serve in coming years and members who come forward in this initial stage of SHSK activities will lay the foundation for coming years.

Significance of Vaikunta Ekadasi

Vaikunta Ekadasi is an important festival dedicated to Lord Vishnu in the Tamil month of Margazhi (December - January). Vaikunta Ekadasi festival is of great significance at the Tirupati Balaji Temple, Srirangam Sri Ranganatha Temple and the Bhadrachalam Temple. In Kerala, it is known as Swarga Vathil Ekadashi and in Andhra, it is also known as Mukkoti Ekadasi. **Next Vaikunta Ekadasi date is January 11, 2014.**

The significance of Vaikunta Edadasi can be traced back to the Padma Purana. The Purana indicates that Lord Vishnu took the form of 'Ekadasi' - female energy - to kill demon Muran. This happened during the month of Margazhi. Impressed by 'Ekadasi', Lord Vishnu told her that whoever worships him on this day will reach 'Vaikunta' (heaven).



Like all Ekadasi days, devotees fast on this day and observe vigil the whole night. Some people indulge in meditation, japa and singing of Hari Kirtan. Rice is avoided during Ekadashi days as it is believed

that the demon Muran finds a dwelling in the rice eaten on Ekadasi day.

It is widely believed that the gates to the heaven open - the Gate of Vaikunta - on the Vaikunta Ekadasi day. It is one of the most auspicious days in Lord Vishnu temples in South India.

The 'Vaikunta Dwaram' or 'the gate to the heaven' is opened on this day. This is the passage encircling the innermost sanctum of the Lord. Scores of devotees queue up to pass through the Gate of Vaikunta in the temples. Vaikunta Ekadasi occurs in December or early January.

It is important to look at the significance of this auspicious day from spiritual angle.

The demon Muran stands for the Rajasic and Tamasic qualities in people, attributed to lust, passion, inertia, arrogance etc. When one conquers these tendencies, one attains the purity of mind, Satva, indispensable for attaining moksha, the liberation or realization of the self.

For realizing the self as pure awareness, purity of mind is required. Fasting helps to keep at bay tendencies which could be triggered by intake of



certain foods. Keeping vigil in the night is symbolic of awareness, or being watchful of the contents of the mind. When the mind is looked at, it becomes still. To abide in the stillness is to attain freedom or peace, acquired

through merging of the mind with the self. This is symbolic of the mind automatically being absorbed at the sight of Vishnu after the arduous fast and vigil.

The belief that rice is prohibited, because Muran dwells in it, symbolically signifies that the eating of rice makes one feel heavy and hampers the vigil. This signifies that entertaining negative tendencies could hamper one's progress towards awareness or consciousness.

In the Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna at the beginning of Kurukshetra War is said to have occurred on this day.

- www.hindu-blog.com & www.wikipedia.org

