

Shree Peetha Nilaya

SERVE A DEITY NEWSLETTER

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BhaktiMarga
JUST LOVE

JAI GURUDEV

Enjoy the first of a new series of the Serve a Deity newsletters. These will deepen your connection to the beloved deities by highlighting a different one each time. Enjoy!

**Shree
Peetha Nilaya**



MAHA-LAKSHMI PUJARI TEAM FOREWORD



Jai Gurudev Everyone,

This will be the first in a series of Serve a Deity newsletters. Each newsletter will be focusing on a specific deity at Shree Peetha Nilaya and an associated festival that will take place here. The aim of this series of newsletters is to:

1. help deepen your knowledge about the deities
2. connect you with the saints that worshipped those deities
3. showcase the specific temple deity and pilgrimage sites that Guruji has visited.

Hopefully reading this newsletter, you will gain what the saints and Guruji have cultivated, a deeper relationship with the Divine. We encourage you to find a place to relax and unwind, tune out from distractions and let this newsletter lead you, word by word, step by step, deeper into a relationship with the Divine.

The deity team that will be taking you through this edition of the newsletter will be the **Maha-Lakshmi Pujari Team** - Sadhananda, Aaradhakananda and Swami VishwaAnashuyananda.

DEITY IN THE SPOTLIGHT: MAHA-LAKSHMI



To kick off this new series, we are starting with Maha-Lakshmi. Some of you might know that Guruji was given the name for The Ashram (Shree Peetha Nilaya) by Maha-Lakshmi Herself back in January 2010. In many depictions of Maha-Lakshmi, we find Her seated on the chest of Maha-Vishnu alongside with His other wife, Bhu-devi. Guruji once stated that in the body of Narayana there are many universes. Our universe resides in the area of the chest of Narayana and our beloved planet Earth resides right over the heart of Narayana. This shows how close to Him She is, how beloved to Lord Narayana She is. Guruji also said that Mother Earth, Bhu-devi (who is the material aspect of Maha-Lakshmi) is known as the jewel of the universe since the Lord Himself manifests on Her to protect Her and rescue humanity out of the suffering from birth and death.

Before Maha-Lakshmi existed as a deity, a symbol 'Sri' was associated with all forms of auspiciousness and wealth. Over time, the identity of Maha-Lakshmi as an embodiment of Sri arose,

and the first hymn, the *Sri Suktam* was dedicated to Maha-Lakshmi. The *Sri Suktam* is part of the oldest of the four *Vedas*, the *Rig Veda*.

Auspiciousness and wealth come in many facets and forms. The way in which humanity can draw from this source of all auspiciousness, wealth and prosperity is from Maha-Lakshmi Herself. She is that source! For the sake of humanity, She has taken eight principle aspects through which you can attain the ultimate infinite auspicious wealth. Her ultimate aim is to bring all souls to the Feet of the Lord, to get you to attain the grace of Narayana and to attain Vaikuntha. It is through Her intercession that humanity has the chance of liberation and an end to all suffering. It is enough to connect with one aspect of Her in prayer to attain Her grace and blessings.

Here is what Guruji said about the first two of the eight aspects of Maha-Lakshmi:

'The first aspect of Maha-Lakshmi is praised for in the studying of the *Gita*. Whatever Krishna has

said in the *Gita*, Maha-Lakshmi stands next to that.

The first worship of Maha-Lakshmi is the studying of the *Gita*. Not just to study it, but to know it and also to try to live it.

The second form of worship of Maha-Lakshmi is the deity worship. She has given a form to concentrate on until you have found Her inner form inside of you. You worship the deity, seeing the deity inside.'

THESE 8 ASPECTS OF MAHA-LAKSHMI GIVE THE 16 QUALITIES



- Name and fame
- Wealth, physical strength, courage
- Victory
- Strength
- Good children
- Valour
- Gold and silver
- Grains and food
- Happiness
- Bliss
- Wisdom
- Beauty
- Religious thoughts
- Morality
- Good health
- Long life

She gives you support through all these aspects so that you can surrender to the Lord and attain Him.

1. Vijaya Lakshmi, **2.** Adhi Lakshmi, **3.** Aisarya Lakshmi, **4.** Santhana Lakshmi, **5.** Dhanya Lakshmi, **6.** Gaja Lakshmi, **7.** Dhana Lakshmi, **8.** Veera Lakshmi

ONE QUALITY THAT MAHA-LAKSHMI REPRESENTS



'O Lakshmi with eyes like lotuses and to whom lotuses are dear, who holds lotuses in Her hands, and dwells within the lotus of the heart, the beloved of the whole world and the One to whom Vishnu concedes, may Your Lotus Feet always be the object of contemplation for me.'

- Sri Suktam

Among all the divine manifestations, goddess Lakshmi is the one who is most commonly associated with the lotus. Maha-Lakshmi is frequently depicted as sitting or standing on a large pink or red lotus, holding a fully blooming lotus in each hand. The lotus symbolizes purity, beauty and represents the awakening of the spiritual consciousness. This is why they are fully associated with Maha-Lakshmi, who manifests all these qualities Herself.

A lotus grows in the mud but it floats on top of the surface of the water. It does not allow itself to be wetted and blooms fully

manifesting its own beauty in the sunlight. This is symbolically the journey of the human being. The human being, as influenced by emotion, desire and materialistic nature of this world, is represented by the mud. Through the act of devotion, Maha-Lakshmi purifies everyone so that one can grow beyond sensual desires and become untouched by sin (symbolized by the lotus not being wetted). The human thereby attains the purity of mind and heart (symbolized by blooming fully) and performs their seva in divine consciousness (symbolized by the sunlight).

Taken from the 108 names of Maha-Lakshmi

om śucaye namaḥ

Salutations to Her who is the embodiment of purity.

- She who resides on the lotus
- She who is the lotus

- She who emerges from the lotus
- She who loves from the lotus
- She who has lotus-like hands
- She who is lotus-eyed
- She who is beautiful like the lotus
- She who emerged out of the lotus
- She who has a lotus-like face
- She who is like the lotus
- She who has the fragrance of the lotus

*māhālakṣmyai ca vidmahē
viṣṇupaṭnyai ca dhīmahī
tanno lakṣmī praçodayāt*

We meditate on Maha-Lakshmi,
we fix our minds on the wife of Vishnu.
May Lakshmi inspire us.

MAHA- LAKSHMI QUOTES FROM GURUJI

'...Maha-Lakshmi helps one to advance, not only in the material field, but also in the spiritual field. In every field, as long as your mind is active, as long as the mind is active, She is in charge of everything. She is this Maha Maya and it is through Her grace that bhakti awakens also.'

Maha-Lakshmi Yajna, 21 May 2016

'You have to understand that well: servant doesn't mean slave. Servant means you are ready to fulfil the wish of the Master at any time. Like Ma Bhagavati, She is sitting in the form of Maha-Lakshmi at the Feet of Sriman Narayana, even doing all Her work, but She is always at the Feet of Narayana. That means that all which is bound by Maya is at the Feet of the Lord as His eternal servant. Once you have accepted that, then you will really see the joy of service, the joy of serving Him.'

Dussehra, 30 September 2017

'Maha-Lakshmi who is the founder of Sri Sampradaya - You see, the word Sri stands for Her. You know, in front of all the names, you know, there is always Sri first, no? Sri is Lakshmi Herself symbolising Her grace in everything. Like I said earlier, everything which is created is out of Her. Through the will of Narayana She created and manifested everything. So, wherever you are, you know, as the Mother She cares for you, She protects you, She looks after you.'

Maha-Lakshmi Yajna, 22 May 2016

'Whenever you see Maha-Lakshmi, She is always seated at the Feet of Narayana, God. This is to remind that our mind should always be at the Feet of the Lord. Because divine potential will never awake itself, love, true love will never awake itself if we let the mind run loose.'

Darshan in Tokyo, Japan, 30 October 2016





This Lakshmi experience took place whilst doing morning puja to the Lakshmi murti in the Shree Peetha Nilaya Mandir
Swami VishwaAnashuyananda

This morning there was a lot of noise in the temple, but it seemed far away. The noise on the outside was not affecting the silence and the love inside. As I was offering the *mukhavasam* near the end of the *puja* I could feel the love of Lakshmi on my fingers, this softness, this tenderness was there. As I offered the flower petals and started to open to this presence of love and tenderness in me, this tenderness arose and this wanting to serve myself to Her was there.

She became more and more present with me, and this experience of surrender as love became more intense. As this surrender of myself became deeper, this love became stronger and this silence became more silent, more still. Her presence was become stronger and stronger.

A communion through feeling and images arose in the stillness of my mind. In this presence of love and silence and in Her presence there was the image of the Lord being so dear to Her. She knew that the Lord was present in all things, therefore the Mother was holding every person,

every creature, and everything in creation so close; such a tender embrace of the Mother was given to all of creation.

It was as if She had just given birth and was holding Her newborn child with great joy and tenderness in Her arms...and Her amazing look of love and immense tenderness was beaming down on the newborn baby. This was the love that She is, was and will be imparting to all creation and to all who come to Her in surrender and through love.

It was a tenderness that draws you so close that you feel that you are being embraced in that presence of tenderness and love. What else can you do other than sit in that surrender and allow Her just to love you like that? You don't need anything. You don't need to go anywhere. You don't need anyone. She is completely holding you and taking care of everything and She is part of you, you are part of Her. You are not separate. Your surrender in love gives you the gift of love and surrender. You are held, there are no problems, you are held, there is great silence. You are held - there is a lot of music going on around and loud noise but the outer noise is nothing in comparison to the inner silence and surrender. You are held.

In the arms of the Mother, in the tenderness of

the Mother, in the love of the Mother, we are in union and need not look for anything more. The mind is at peace, the heart is at peace and surrendered in love, the body is at peace. There are no distractions, just the feeling of being held, knowing She is holding all creation like this. Where do you need to go to find happiness? Where do you need to go to fit in? Where do you need to go to become someone?

She is loving you, She is deeply caring for you, She is deeply concerned about you. Allow your mind to remain in peace, let this mind remain in its silence. Let the heart continue to allow its experience of surrender and deep acceptance of being held and supported intrinsically.

By entering into this love with the deity, we enter into this union with them. To surrender all the senses really means to truly surrender to the Divine with love...since love is something that is deeper than the senses...it is the sense of feeling that it is something deeper than the body...it is the sense of oneself as being much deeper than the mind even.

In that, we become established in yoga, in that we become established in Love, in that we become established in silence. In that the mind is calm, in that there is no distraction, in the deity there is no restlessness, one is fully at home. One is.

SAINTS WHO WORSHIPPED MAHA-LAKSHMI

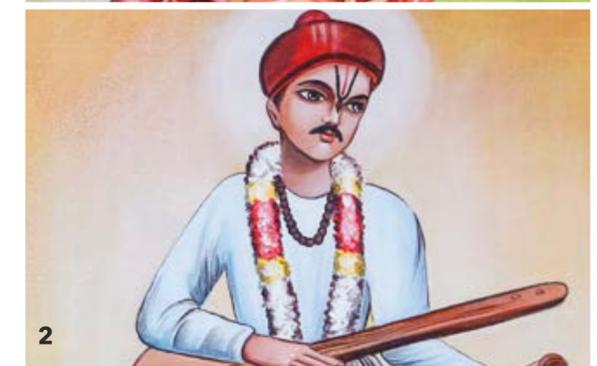
For Vaishnavas, Maha-Lakshmi holds a very special position since She is the main intercessor that brings the devotees to their Lord Narayana, with whom She has an eternal loving relationship. Therefore, many saints throughout history have worshipped Maha-Lakshmi and had direct experiences with Her.

Narada Muni (photo 1) is said to serve Maha-Lakshmi directly and attentively. Once, during this seva, he asked Maha-devi for Narayana's *Maha-prasad*, which was then given to him. Narada went in bliss and a whole *lila* happened that is connected to the history of the famous temple of Jagannath Puri.

In the *Padma Purana*, we find the Maha-Lakshmi *Ashtakam*, which is a praise made by Lord Indra to Her. The first three Alvars (Poigai, Boothath, and Pei) had darshan of Lord Narayana together, and they described the sweet vision of Maha-Lakshmi sitting in the chest of God.

Saint Namdev (photo 2) once performed a miracle praying to Rukmini-devi (incarnation of Maha-Lakshmi): 'Several miracles are reported to have been performed by both Namdev and Jnanadev. Once Namdev and Jnanadev reached the desert of Marwar. Namdev was dying of thirst. They found a well, but the water was at such a low depth that it was impossible to get it by ordinary means. Jnanadev proposed to assume the form of a bird by his *laghima siddhi* and bring the water up in his beak. But Namdev proved superior to him. He prayed to Rukmini. The level of the water rose miraculously to the surface. The well is seen even today at Kaladji, ten miles off Bikaner.'

The famous mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujam (photo 3) worshipped Namagiri Thayar, a famous Maha-Lakshmi deity in Tamil Nadu. He credits Her for his academic achievements since She often appeared to him in dreams revealing mathematical formulas and even giving him permission to move to London.



PILGRIMAGE PLACES OF MAHA-LAKSHMI VISITED BY GURUJI

For all Bhakti Marga devotees, the main Maha-Lakshmi pilgrimage site is Shree Peetha Nilaya itself. Paramahansa Vishwananda revealed to us that She resides always at The Ashram. Everything here is Her blessing, together with Guruji's grace. Two years ago, I remember the coming of a new visitor that happened to become a resident. He told Guruji: 'Thank You that I can come here, Guruji. Your house is very beautiful!' Guruji's quick reaction was to point to the image of Maha-Lakshmi on the wall and say: 'It is Her house! It has to be beautiful!'

The biggest temple complex in India is in Sri Rangam, the Rangannath Temple, visited again by Guruji in 2019. It is the main temple for Sri Vaishnavas. Inside the complex of the temple, there's a shrine for Ranganayaki, affectionally called Thayar by the devotees, the wife of

the Lord. This vighraha of Maha-Lakshmi is praised by saints since ancient times, and has a peculiarity: on feast days, Her *utsava murti* doesn't leave the shrine as it is traditionally done in other temples, but all other deities, including Narayana Himself, come to see Her.

The famous Mumbai's Maha-Lakshmi Temple has a mesmerizing story: built around 1785, the history of this temple is supposedly connected with the building of a causeway connecting the islands. Apparently, after portions of the sea wall collapsed twice, the chief engineer, Ramji Shivji Prabhu, dreamt of a Lakshmi deity in the sea near Worli. A search recovered the deity, and he built a temple for Her. After this, the work on the causeway could be completed without a problem!



1 & 4 The Ashram Shree Peetha Nilaya

2 Maha-Lakshmi Temple in Mumbai (Kali at Her right, and Saraswati at Her left)

3 Sri Ranganayaki in the Rangannath Temple, Sri Rangam

FEEDING MAHA-LAKSHMI HER FAVOURITE FOODS



KHEER

Kheer is a traditional rice pudding recipe ubiquitous in Indian households. Typically, it is prepared both for large celebrations but also as a simple sweet for the family, no event is complete without it. Kheer is a versatile dish, that once mastered, can be varied to suit personal tastes. It is delicious served hot or chilled.

Ingredients (for 6 cups)

- 1 cup of rice
- 1 cup of sugar
- 3 litres of milk (happy cow milk, coconut milk, soy milk are all fine variations)
- 1 cup of cream (optional)
- 1/2 cup of peeled silvered almonds, chopped cashews or chopped pistachios
- 2 teaspoons of cardamom
- 1 cinnamon stick (optional)
- 1/4 teaspoon of nutmeg (optional)
- A pinch of saffron

This is a typical ratio of rice to milk, but this may vary according to the rice used. However, more milk than this can always be used, just continue reducing-this makes for a richer and creamier kheer that is even more indulgent.

Preparation (cooking time app. 1hr)

1. Mix sugar, cardamom, nutmeg and nuts together in a bowl; set aside for later.
2. Wash the rice very well, until the water is no longer cloudy and runs clean without starch. (At this point, rice can be soaked in cold water for up to 2 hours prior to cooking in order to begin to open the grain, thereby speeding up the cooking process. This step is not necessary.)
3. Place the cream (if using) and drained rice in a non-stick pot. Add 1 litre of milk, cinnamon stick, and saffron and warm until the milk begins to simmer.
4. Let the rice simmer for 15-20 min on a low-medium heat stirring continuously to prevent sticking.

5. As the rice begins to absorb the milk, begin to add the remaining milk, approximately 300 ml at a time on a high heat and continue to stir continuously. Continue adding the milk little by little. Add more milk each time it is absorbed by the rice. Continue in this way until the remaining milk is all finished.

6. The rice is cooked when the grain is very soft, and even some grains have broken in half or more. If the rice is still undercooked and/or all the grains are still whole, another liter of milk can be used, adding and cooking as in step 5.

7. When the rice has reached this state and now has a semi-thick creamy consistency, add sugar, spices, and almonds and stir well until all sugar is melted and almonds are incorporated in the milky rice.

8. After the addition of the sugar mixture, the rice will again become a bit thin; continue to cook another several minutes until a creamy consistency is achieved. Pour into a bowl and offer.

Note: These are optional add-ins to kheer, like fruit-banana, pineapple, coconut, etc. or vanilla that can make for wonderful variations.

UPCOMING DEITY JOURNEYS



We are quite happy with the Deity Journeys that are planned this year. Due to fact that The Ashram is still closed due to the Coronavirus situation, we have scheduled:

the **Narasimha Journey on 6 May** and the **Maha-Lakshmi Journey on 15 May** to be available **online**.

For those who would like to sign up, please go to the BM Event calendar and register on the event. Those that registered, you will receive an e-mail with further instruction on how to download the material for these two Deity Journeys.

bhaktimarga.org/events/event/online-journey-narasimha

bhaktimarga.org/events/event/online-journey-maha-lakshmi

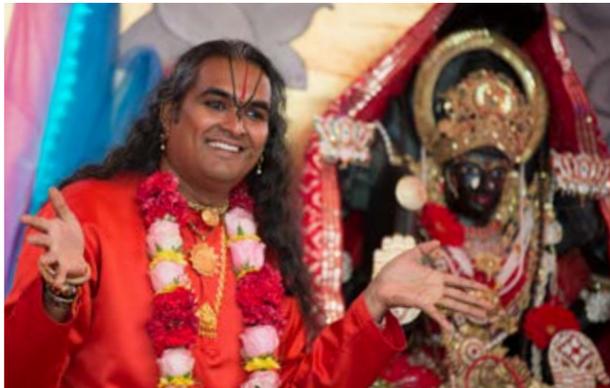
What you receive

- Narasimha Explained given by Swami VishwaRevatikaantananda and Maha-Lakshmi Explained by Swami VishwaAnashuyananda.
- Connecting to Lord Narasimha/Maha-Lakshmi through sacred chanting given by Rishi Akashananda
- Diving into *kirtana-bhakti*, singing praises to Lord Narasimha/Maha-Lakshmi with Aaradhakananda

All the videos will only be available for downloading for 7 days:

6-13 May for Narasimha and
15-22 May for Maha-Lakshmi

UPCOMING SPN EVENTS



Narasimha Chaturdashi will take place on **6 May**. **Since The Ashram is still closed, the event will be livestreamed for all to view.** The event will run from 17:00 - 21:00. Since it's the appearance day of our main deity in our Bhutabhrteshwarnath Mandir, in SPN we will be doing *kalash puja*, *yajna* and full body *abhishekam* to Him. The link for this event will be provided shortly on our social media channels. We expect that Guruji will be doing the main *abhishekam* for Narasimha on this precious occasion. Please register via the BM Event page.

Maha-Lakshmi Yajna will take place over the weekend of the **16/17 May**. **This event will also be livestreamed due to The Ashram still being closed.** The event will run from 10:00 - 18:00 Saturday and 10:00 - 17:00 Sunday. Please register via the BM Event page.



PREVIOUS DEITY JOURNEY PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK



Kaladhara Dasi, Greece

Jai Gurudev,

My first Shivaratri is a turning point in my Bhakti Marga life: there is now a 'before Shivaratri' and an 'after Shivaratri'.

The Journey with Shiva helped me so much to know Shiva better and to fully enjoy Shivaratri. The first day you asked us why we decided to join the Journey with Shiva, my reply was 'to build a connection with Shiva because I didn't have any connection'. Now I can say that Mahadev has already marked my spiritual journey on many levels (difficult to explain in few words).

Time is needed to 'digest' all that you organised for the participants in addition to Shivaratri.

Thanks a lot to you all, thank you Guruji.
Much Love

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH OUR DEITIES



How Lord Rama Came to our Temple - Rishi Chidaananda

At the end of 2019, a few devotees were sitting in the temple with Guruji after evening *arati*, and one of the devotees said, 'Guruji, the Rama devotees have no one to pray to in the temple at Shree Peetha Nilaya.' At that point, Guruji turned to me and said, 'Organise that Rama comes to the temple!'

Over the next few months, we were able to get the *murtis* from India. It was only possible through the service of the devotees who all came together to raise the amount of money required to carve them and then ship them to Shree Peetha Nilaya.

While we were collecting the money for the *murtis*, the same devotee that had asked Guruji about Rama (a *brahmachari* living in The Ashram), gave a donation with a note saying, 'This is everything I have, and it's all for Rama.'

When the *murtis* were finally initiated by Guruji in 2020, Guruji made this same *brahmachari* a *pujari* for Lord Rama. Showing that if you surrender to the Lord, He will always take care and give you the opportunity to serve Him.





Kali requests to live in Shree Peetha Nilaya! - Paartha

In 2009, Guruji decided to build a temple for Kali. Before knowing about Kali, and becoming a *pujari* for her, I only knew about Maha-Lakshmi. Even before Bhakti Marga was founded, Guruji taught us the 'Lakshmi Vaibhav' *puja*. He started doing this *puja* with us each Friday. He asked us to fast from eggs and salt on Fridays. Towards the evening we had to wash our feet (as washing one's feet was equal to washing one's whole body), and then perform the *puja*. Guruji prepared the *puja* utensils, the pot which was placed on the rice, the gold coin, the *prasad*, etc. We continued doing this *puja* every Friday. Even when we moved into Steffenshof *ashram* this tradition continued.

There He asked us to keep repeating the *śrī vaibhava lakṣmī mantra* from that *puja* on a regular basis:

yā raktām bujavāsinī vilāsinī caṇḍāṁśu tejasvinī |

yā raktā rudhirāambarā harisakhi yā śrī manolhādinī ||

yā ratnā karamanthanāt pragaṭitā viṣṇo svayā gehinī |

sa maṁ pātu manoramā bhagavatī lakṣmīś-ca padmāvatī ||

By repeating this mantra, I was able to deepen my connection to Divine Mother in the form of Maha-Lakshmi, and I started to feel closer to Her. This continued over the next months and years.

Then, in 2009, Guruji decided to build a Kali Mandir near the gate where one enters The

Ashram property. He said that Kali herself asked Him to build a temple beneath that tree, as she lived in that tree.

It proved impossible to build a temple right under the tree, so it was built a little bit aside, facing the road coming into the property, 'greeting' everyone driving onto The Ashram property. Kali is absorbing and transforming the negativity of people who come. He also said that she is a private goddess, therefore her temple remains locked.

When Guruji inaugurated the Kali Temple, He installed the large Dakshina-kali. She is standing on Shiva with her right foot forward, as opposed to Vama-kali who has the left foot forward (who is to be worshipped only by initiates).

As Dakshina-kali, she is the benign form, giving blessings and boons to those devoted to her. There are different explanations as to why she stands on Shiva. The most popular being that, while engaged in battle against the demons, she was in such a rage that the only way to stop her was for Shiva to lie down in front of her, making her accidentally step on him, and realizing it, calm down. Another explanation is, that Shiva wanted so much to attain the touch of her feet and therefore her grace, that he lay down in front of her, so she that would step on him. It's also a depiction of the play between Consciousness (Shiva, being calm and static) and Shakti (Kali, being creative and dynamic/wild).

The smaller *utsava murti*, is her form as Mahakali with several arms, holding the weapons of different gods, representing the power of all the gods, therefore representing the totality (Brahman). After the Inauguration of the temple, Guruji instructed me that, when doing *puja* to her (the small *utsava murti*), she should not be dressed, as she preferred to be naked. Kali is ever-free, unbound and beyond all concepts and limited ideas and mental conditions such as shame, anger, etc.

**'You think you understand the goddess?
Even philosophers cannot explain her.
The scriptures say that she, herself,
is the essence of us all. It is she, herself,
who brings life through her sweet will.**

**You think you understand her?
I can only smile. You think that you can
truly know her? I can only laugh!
But what our minds accept, our hearts do not.
Ants try to grasp the moon; we, the goddess.'**

- Ramprasad Sen





Bringing Shirdi Home - Yamuna

It was during the India pilgrimage in 2010 when we visited the town of Shirdi with Guruji. After visiting several temples, we went through the streets of the small town where there are many traders. Gurudev likes to go shopping and in one of the shops He immediately fell in love with a big statue of Shirdi, wonderfully handcrafted from white marble. The picture on the top was taken by Yogeshwar right there. Time flew by and we ended up in Kanchipuram and flew to Chennai.

Gurudev had already left, but a small group was still there, sitting together on the last evening. We were all very happy. Gurudev had spent such a wonderful time with us. At that time there was not yet the idea that we would give Him something as a final gift, but this was born that very night!

On a whim I said: wouldn't it be wonderful if we could give Gurudev this statue as a thank you, which He could then give a place to in Springen? A crazy idea, not only because of the price of over 10,000 euros but also because of the transport and the negotiations and we were already in Chennai....not in Shirdi.

But then, one of the participants said, how about we give 5000 euros? That was almost a shock - so the game started. After returning home, I wrote immediately to all participants, explained the situation and after a few days we had the sum together. Yogeshwar created a card and we were able to give it to Gurudev. Guruji first thought this was symbolic, until He understood that, no: it was this very statue, this Shirdi, that would be coming to Springen.

Of course, only then the negotiations began - a story in itself - and then endless months, where Shirdi was on his journey, got stuck in customs, and many papers and checks had to be done, until the box with the precious asset arrived at Shree Peetha Nilaya. There Shirdi rested in Gurudev's garage for a few months before Gurudev opened it together with some of us - a sublime moment.

It took a few more years until the temple was built, thanks to other wonderful helpers and patrons. Then we could finally enjoy the Inauguration done by Guruji.

Once again, thanks to all the wonderful participants who made this possible! Ever since then, we always give a thank you gift to Gurudev at the end of a pilgrimage, which is certainly not a decisive factor in terms of price, but is given with spontaneity and from our hearts as a small thank you for the time with Him.

Lifting the Weight of Mankind - Nallini

The construction of the Shirdi Sai Baba Temple started on 20 August, 2016, in Shree Peetha Nilaya. The end of September was the date to put the *murti* inside the temple and it was one month before the official Inauguration ceremony.

Everything was ready to start. The *murti* of Shirdi Sai was brought with the car in front of the temple. After the first moment of enthusiasm and excitement, the guys realised that they were facing a huge problem to solve: they could not move the *murti* even a centimetre!

It came time for evening prayers. Guests started gathering around curiously to see what was going on. The guys involved were having an animated discussion on how to do it, what to do, and in which way. Different opinions and different ways had been tried, but nothing was working. At the end, the guys started to get discouraged and to worry because it was not possible to move it, no chance, no way!!!

Suddenly, Guruji appeared and asked what was going on, why were so many people in front of the temple and why was the *murti* of Shirdi Sai still outside?!

First, with great humility, Guruji listened to all the opinions of the guys, to what they tried that didn't work, and to all their doubts. Then, in a very calm state, He decided to call all the strong men from The Ashram and asked them to position themselves next to the *murti*. He then asked all the people around the *mandir* to go to prayers in the main temple.

My duty was to take photos, so I could stay. I had been inside the temple since the morning, trying to catch some nice moments, and I could see all the efforts that these guys had done without success. I was really interested to see how Guruji would manage this!

One guy was scared and asked Guruji, was it not dangerous for them, because they were without shoes and the *murti* was so heavy? Guruji answered in a very simple way that he could go away if he was afraid. I remember the long silence after this sentence. At that point, Guruji tied His hair back, pulled up the sleeves of His beautiful yellow kurta for prayers, and started to lead the guys.

Little by little, the *murti* moved!!!

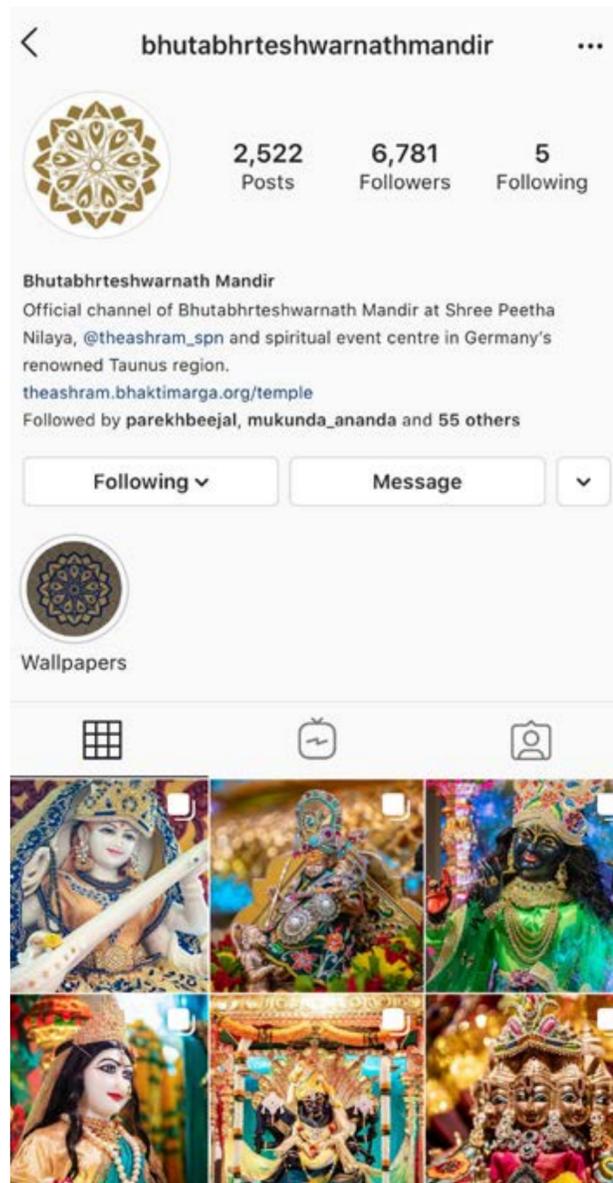
I noticed that often one of Guruji's hands was on Angelo's shoulder and one finger of the other hand was moving up and down. At the same time, He was shouting to the guys: 'All together... One, two, three...push!!!...Now... push on the right...!!! Now... push on the left...!!!'

I was in front of a miracle, but I did not realise it then. I can't find a rational way to explain that, but because it was so natural and easy, my mind could not even doubt it. I could see that Guruji didn't use His physical effort to move the *murti* - He was just guiding the guys, and I can testify that in less than an hour, the *murti* was in the proper position inside the temple.

Only years later did I realise that Guruji was guiding us like Krishna guided Arjuna on the battlefield of the Mahabharata war, and that when we are next to an Incarnation of God, everything becomes lighter. What a grace to have the opportunity to experience this extraordinary event!



STAY CONNECTED



We are so happy that you are part of our service to God in the home of Guruji. We invite you to continue to be a part of it and to stay in touch with us daily, weekly and for special events. Here's how:

Connect Every Day

Feel like you are part of our morning prayers and evening *arati* with our livestream.

theashram.bhaktimarga.org

We post 30 stunning photos daily to give you the opportunity to receive darshan wherever you are.

[instagram.com/bhutabhrteshwarnathmandir](https://www.instagram.com/bhutabhrteshwarnathmandir)

Connect During the Week

You can also stay connected with our Telegram channel for the Temple Satsangs: morning *Srimad Bhagavatam* and evening *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* satsangs given in the temple by Swamis and members of the Bhakti Marga Academy. Just sign up here:

https://t.me/SPN_Temple_Satsangs

Note: To connect this way, you will need Telegram downloaded on either your phone or laptop.

We hope that you enjoyed reading this new style of newsletter. Our next Serve a Deity newsletter will be centered around Radha-Krishna and should be coming out just prior to Krishna Janmashtami (early August).

Much Love

Maha-Lakshmi Pujari Team:
Swami VishwaAnashuyananda, Sadhananda and Aaradhakananda
Tusti and all contributors of this newsletter

**MAY MAHA-LAKSHMI
BLESS YOU ALL.**

