



## Dear Yagya Friends,

June and July were amazing months with yagyas that were more beautiful than any we have ever done. So, this is a newsletter of images; thirty two pages of beautiful photos from the June and July yagyas.

These yagyas, which took place in Kanchipuram, Rameshwaram, and Varanasi show the simplicity and elegance of the vedic rituals. I think also you'll see sincerity, spirituality and enjoyment in the faces of the priests who perform them. They do really good work that just isn't available anywhere else. We are indeed fortunate.

Coming up in August, our yagyas will be performed in a wonderful Shiva temple in Rajamundri, Andhra Pradesh. This temple features a magnificent Shiva Lingam that is a single two story tall quartz crystal. The temple is also dedicated to the goddesses (a Shakti Peetam) and so it works beautifully with our Ati Rudra and Sahasra Chandi programs.

The Puja.net web site will be updated with signup information by August 1st. I hope everyone will find a way to participate this month and support the work of our great preists and pundits.

Enjoy the newsletter. If you have suggestions or comments, I'm always interested in hearing them.

Very best regards,

*Ben Collins*



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## August Yagyas

Our August 10 Day Yagyas will be performed in the beautiful temple outside Rajamundri in Andra Pradesh.



The temple complex is located in the countryside about 55km from the Rajamundri train station. Compared to Kanchipuram, Rajamundri tends to be cooler and wetter as you can see.

The temple features a two story crystal lingam and the temple itself is built in two levels so that you can access both the bottom and the top of the lingam.

The shelters with the thatched roofs are where our homam (fire yagya) will take place.

Aditya, one of our leading priests, is pictured in the top row. His father is a priest in this temple.

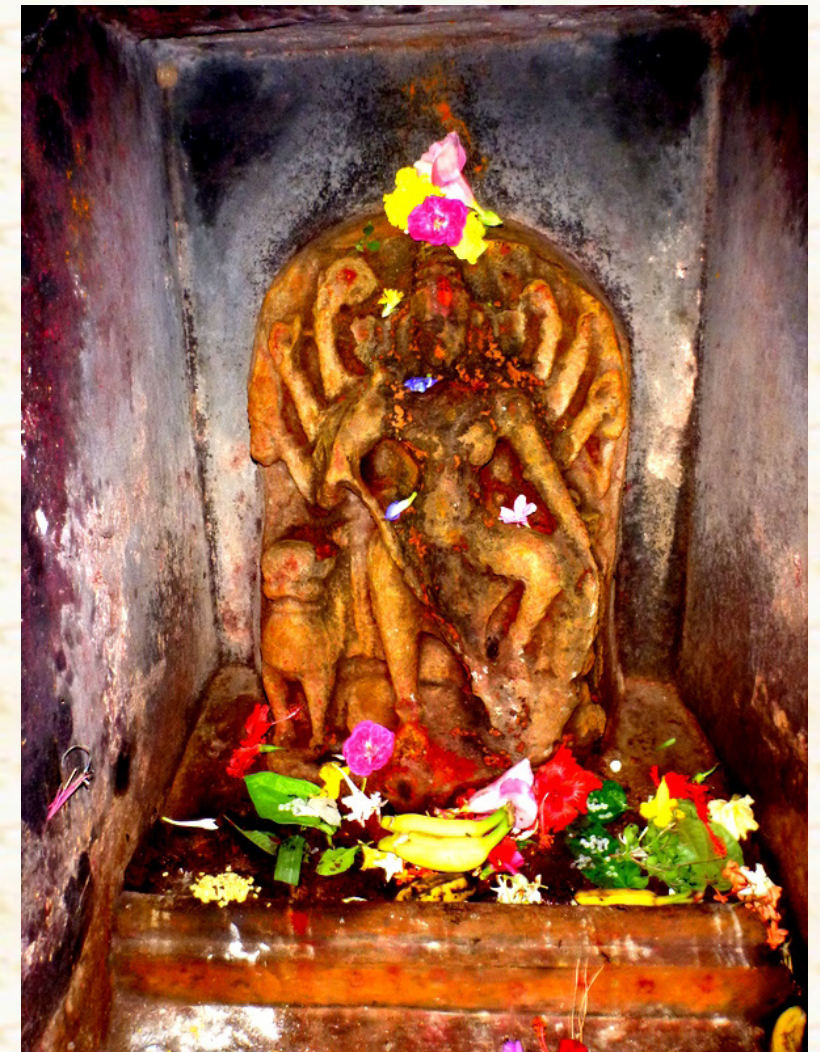




The temple is both a Shiva temple and a goddess temple. Historically it is considered to be a “shakti peetham,” meaning that it has a special connection to the goddess and her power.

There are many smaller shrines to the goddess. Note the middle image above where Lakshmi is being bathed by an elephant (Gaja Lakshmi).

There are also many Shiva Lingams on the temple grounds, each of which is cared for with pujas and flowers on a daily basis.

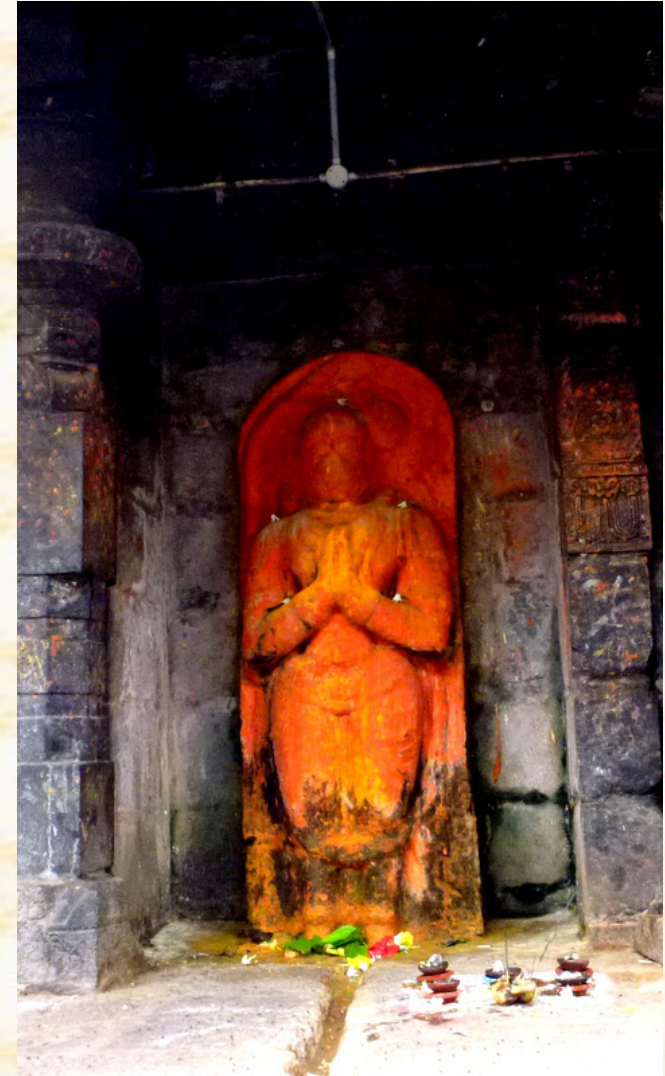


This is a special lingam arrangement that consists of 108 individual lingams so that when you do a Rudra Abishekam, you are actually doing 108 at a time. A great multiplier!



The most unique feature of the temple is the two story tall Shiva lingam made from a single piece of crystal. To the right you can see the bottom segment.

In the lower row of images, you can see the upper section of the lingam with a flower mala draped over the top. The metal container suspended over the top contains water which continually drips on the lingam. Traditionally this is done to keep Shiva cool because all the work in his role as the Destroyer of Ignorance, makes him hot!







Various photos from around the temple grounds. Note the big Nandi. The center photo is the area in which our August yagyas will be performed, just outside the main sanctum.





**Shiva lingams are everywhere!  
All nicely decorated with flowers.**







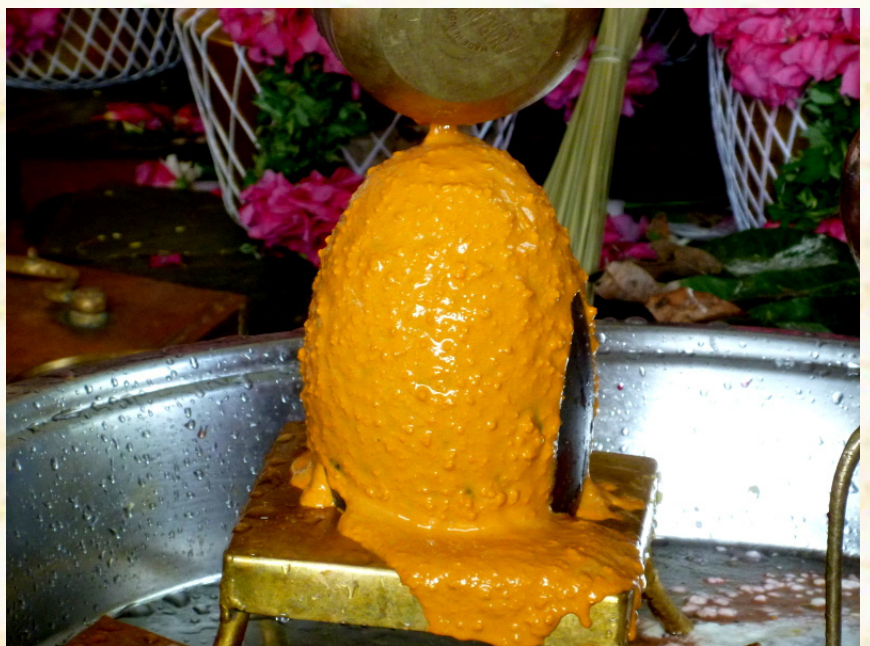
## Ati Rudra and 10 Day Yagyas

The July yagyas were performed in Rameshwaram, on the eastern coast of Tamil Nadu. This area is associated with the ancient Indian epic called the Ramayana. Here in Rameshwaram, Rama and Hanuman built a land bridge to Lanka in order to rescue Rama's wife Sita.

It is an area that is considered deeply spiritual and especially auspicious for the performance of pujas and yagyas. Each year our priests participate and support the recitation of the three main Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama).









# Vedic Recitation

Our priests joined those from the Sringeri Mutt to recite the entirety of the Rig, Sama, and Yajur Vedas. Each day they sat in groups according to their veda and recited the text. When you consider that the Rig Veda contains 10,000 verses, this is quite an effort!

The benefits of this recitation are considerable because all the yagyas our group performs come from the Vedas. So, you have the subtle effects of having performed every vedic yagya.





# Guru Poornima Yagya

On Guru Poornima our priests performed a special yagya to honor the important role that gurus and teachers of all kinds play in our lives. After performing pujas to purify the water contained in the kalasa pots, they carried them to a special temple that featured twelve Jyotir Lingams - special lingams for Shiva specifically in his form as Dakshinamurti, the prototypical guru.

Then they carried the kalasa pots to a temple dedicated to the feet of the Guru. Traditionally the feet of the Guru are important as a source of his “energy” and treating them with reverence is a gesture of humility and veneration.

The purified water was poured over the carved marble sandals as an acknowledgement of the important role that a guru plays in our spiritual development. The long term effect of this yagya is to increase our ability to attract good teachers and guides on our spiritual path.









कवित्ववाराशिनिशाकराभ्यां  
दौर्भाग्यदावाम्बुदमालिकाभ्याम् ।  
दूरिकृतानम्रविपत्ततिभ्यां  
नमो नमः श्रीगुरुपादुकाभ्याम् ॥ २ ॥  
kavitvavārāśiniśākarābhyāṁ  
daurbhāgyadāvāmbudamālikābhyām ।  
dūrikṛtānamravipattatibhyām  
namo namaḥ śrīgurupādukābhyām ॥ 2 ॥

I honor the holy sandals of the guru,  
which serve as the source of water  
to put out the fires of misfortune  
and remove all the distress from the lives of those  
who offer their reverence

-Guru Paduka Stotram by Adi Shankara







अत्रिनेत्रः शिवः साक्षात् द्विबाहुश्च हरिः स्मृतः ।  
योऽचतुर्वदनो ब्रह्मा श्रीगुरुः कथितः प्रिये ॥

Guru is Shiva without three eyes  
He is the Lord Vishnu with two hands.  
He is again Brahma with one face.



## Adi Shankara Abishekam

The last part of the Guru Poornima Yagya was performed in a shrine for Adi Shankara - the founder of the both the Sringeri and Kanchipuram Monasteries (Mutt).

In these images you see Adi Shankara as the largest, central figure with his students sitting beside him. The remaining water from the morning pujas is poured over his feet and hands. This is done as an act of reverence, and to purify the temple.

Adi Shankara is one of the most influential figures in Indian spiritual history and his influence is still felt today. He wrote many commentaries on the Vedas, the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, and the Brahma Sutras. He established centers of learning to protect and maintain the various vedic traditions. These days, the Mutts are centers for the training of priests and pundits.

He is most widely known as a teacher of Vedanta, the school of thought that one can experience the ultimate reality of Brahman directly through meditation and that this forms the foundation for a successful life in both spiritual and material terms.







*Nasti nir-vasanat maunat param suhakrd uttamam  
vijnat atma-svarepasya svananda-rasa-Payinah*

For one who has realized his own Self, there is no other state more pleasant and enjoyable than quietness, which comes from the fulfillment and subsequent absence of all desires.

-Vivekachudamani by Adi Shankara







*Iti srutva guror vakyam prasrayena krt'anatih;  
sa tena sam-anujnato yayau nirmukta-bandhanah*

**Hearing the words of the master and  
bowing down to him with all reverence,  
with his permission and blessing, the  
student departed,  
liberated; freed from all bondage**

*Gurur eva sadananda-sindhau nirmagna-manasah;  
pavayan vasudham sarvam vicacara nirantarah*

**And the master too, with his mind always merged  
in the ocean of bliss,  
went away to continue to purify the world.**

**-Vivekacudamani by Adi Shankara**



## Guru Poornima - Varanasi Vyasa Puja and Shiva Abishekam

On Guru Poornima, the pundits in Varanasi began the day with a puja for Vyas, the great rishi who organized the Vedas into the form that we know them today; Rig, Sama, and Yajur. He wrote the Puranas and the Mahabharata which contains the well known Bhagavad Gita.

He is honored as a great teacher every year on Guru Poornima, which is also known as Vyasa Poornima. To the left you see one of the rare temple images of Vyasa.

The image below is from Angkor Wat and shows Vyasa dictating the Mahabharata to Ganesha who served as his scribe.

































## Rama Temple Abishekam

At the conclusion of the Vedic Recitation program in Rameshwaram, our priests went to a Rama temple to perform a final abishekam yagya ritual.

In the temple you will see Rama and his wife Seetha with Hanuman standing in the corner.









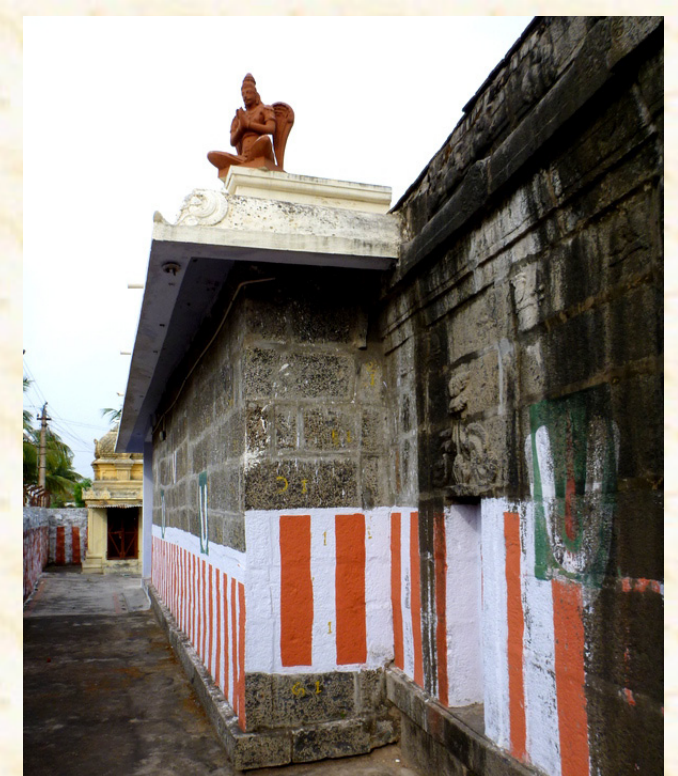
# Lakshmi Temple Abishekam

## Kanchipuram, June

For our June Temple Yagya, our priest traveled to a beautiful Lakshmi temple outside of Kanchipuram.

In the following photos you can see both the large granite deity and the utsava (festival) deity which is made of brass.

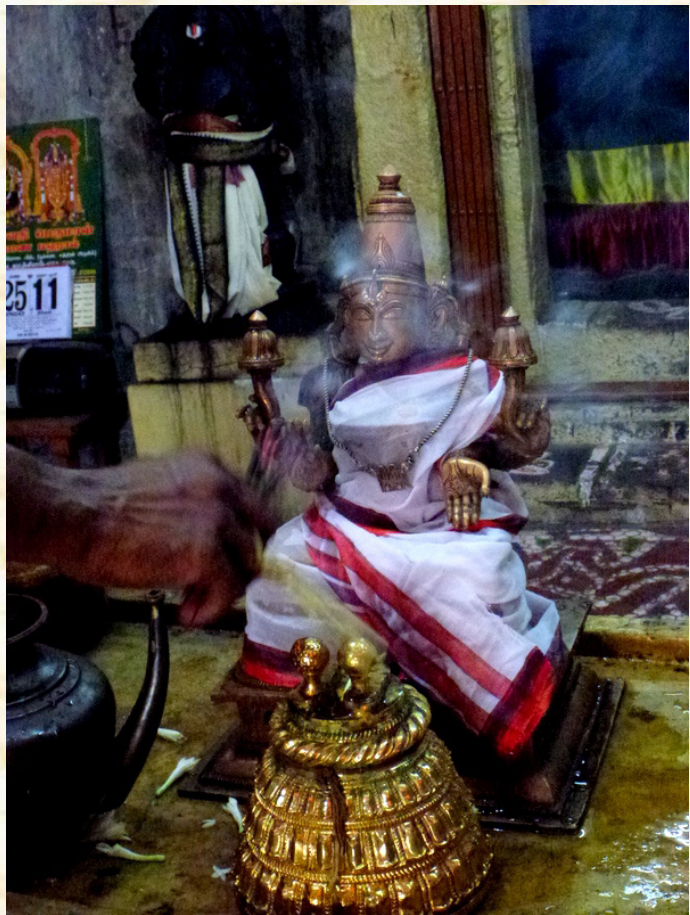
Our abishekam was performed on the utsava deity and then both were dressed in beautiful silk sarees. Look at the solid gold crown on the utsava Lakshmi!



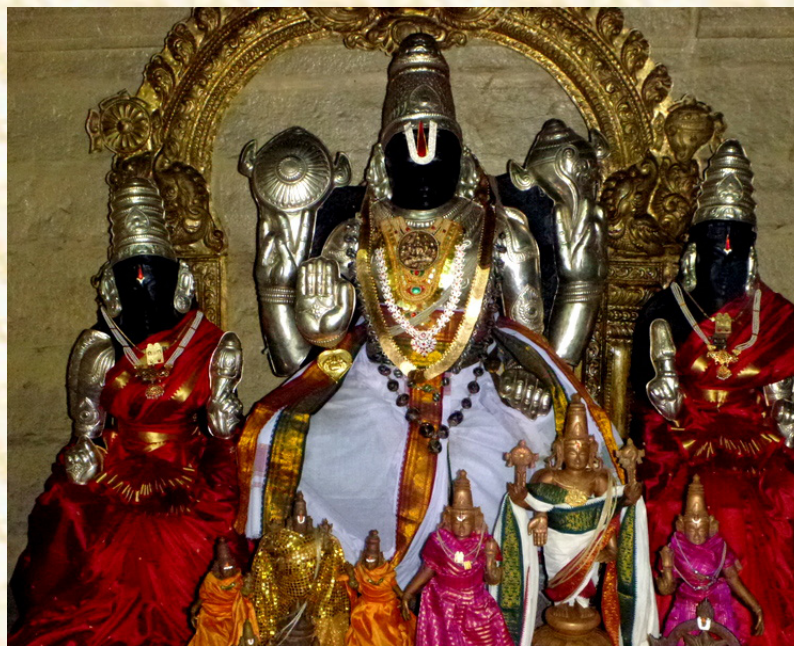
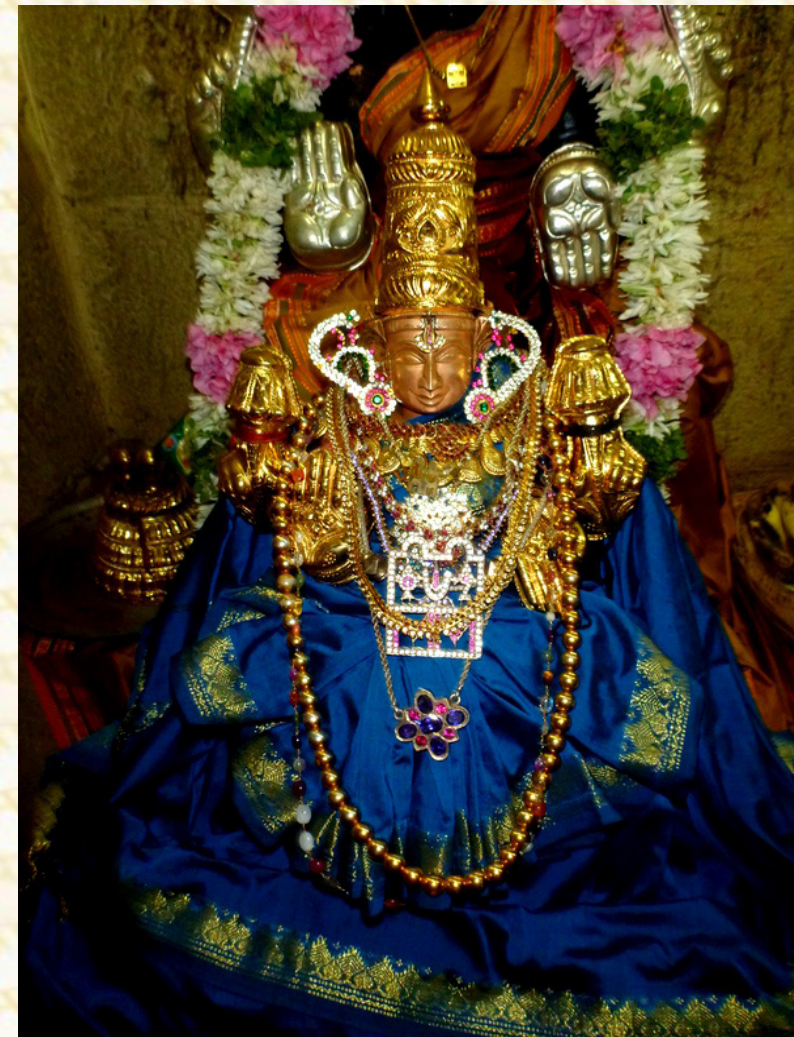
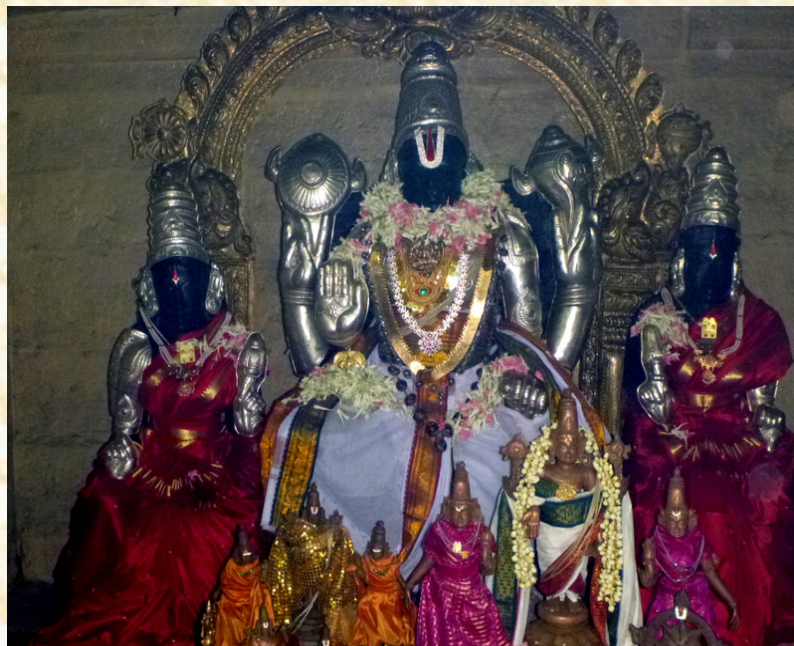












OM Lakshmiyei Namaha!





*Kratau supte jagrat tvamasi phala-yoge kratu-matam,  
Kva karma pradh-vastam  
phalati purusa-radhana-mrte;  
Atas-tvam sam preksya  
kratusu phala-dana-prati-bhuvam,  
Srutau sraddham baddhva  
drdha-parikarah karmasu janah.*

**When a yagya is ended, You remain awake to bestow its fruit on the yagya sponsor. How can any action bear fruit if it is not accompanied by worship of You, O Lord?**

**Therefore, knowing You to be the giver of the fruits of yagya (sacrifice) and putting faith in the Vedas, people become steadfast in the performance of yagya.**

**-Shiva Mahimnah Stotram**