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UPCOMING EVENTS FROM SRI RAJARAJESWARI PETTAM

N/A

REGULAR SERVICES:

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

MORNINGS - 9:30 am - 1:00 pm

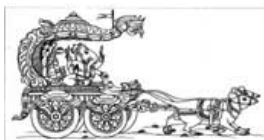
EVENINGS - 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

AND USA HOLIDAYS

ALL DAY (9:30 am – 9:00 pm)

- ? Pujas on Weekdays are at
9:30am, 12:30pm & 7:00p
- ? Pujas on Weekends are at 10am,
12:00pm & 6:00pm
- ? Abhishekam for the Devi is at
10:00am on Saturdays
- ? Navavarana Pujas are performed
every Poomima



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SRI CHAKRA

THE SOURCE OF THE COSMOSE

Blossom 6 Petal 4

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Kalasam At the Peetam

SRI CHAKRA

THE SOURCE OF THE COSMOSE

At The Peetam:

The highlight of the last bimonthly period was the arrival of Guruji and Amma, like a *rishi* and his *patni*, at the peetam on May 22. They were accorded a fitting reception with *poornakumbham* by more than 15 couples. Guruji, with his usual enthusiasm, has already visited various parts of North America (New York, New Jersey, Buffalo, Canada, California and Pittsburgh). He has also motivated student volunteers to construct a dome house similar to the ones at Devipuram. (Please see the article entitled, “Dome Construction in Buffalo”). He is also putting together, in collaboration with Devi Parvati, a retreat entitled “svaTANTRA”. This will be conducted in Rochester over two weekends (July 29-31 and August 5-7) and will focus on *yoga*, bringing *tantra* into our daily lives, creative visualization techniques and meditation, massage techniques, *kala avahana* ritual demonstration etc.

Continuing the annual tradition, a marriage took place at the peetam on May 21. (This day marks the anniversary of the consecration of the first *poornameru* at the peetam in 1988). Several members of Devi’s family were in attendance for the

wedding of Sudha and Mike. *Sri Chakra* is also pleased to inform its readers of the marriage of Ramakrishnan, one of the devotees from Rochester, with Chitra. The wedding took place in Madras. On their return to the peetam, they were received with *mangala arathi*. The last bimonthly period also saw the wedding of Raghavan, the nephew of Sri Chaitanyananda Natha. The marriage took place in Toronto. Sri Chaitanyananda Natha’s brother (Sri Manoharan) and sister (Smt. Senbagadevi Guhapperumal) arrived from Sri Lanka. Sri Manoharan also visited the peetam. Sri Chaitanyananda Natha also performed the wedding of Brinda and Sanjay Bijawat in Detroit. *Sri Chakra* wishes all the newlyweds a long and happy married life.

Sri Chakra is also happy to inform its readers of the birth of a baby girl—Devika—to Dr. Veena and Ram.

Sri Chaitanyananda Natha performed several *poojas* in the last bimonthly period—at the *Kroucheswari* (Missisauga), *Bhuvaneswari* (Syracuse) and *Padmavati* (Pittsburgh) peetams, as well as at the residences of Segarajasingam (Toronto), Saraswati and Prasad (Rochester) and Lalita Navaratham (Toronto). He also visited New Jersey and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In New Jersey, he performed homams at the *Kanyakumari* Peetam and the residence of Arunagirinathar. He also performed a *pooja* at an industrial site and a *Lalita Sahasranama Pooja* at the Dhanabalasingam residence. In Milwaukee, he performed a *homam* and

pooja at the residence of Ashwin and Dr. Sangeeta Patel.

Sri Chakra regrets to inform the passing away of Sri Ganpat Rao, father of Gayatriamba (*Prahlada Peetam*) and Charulata Chavan (*Bhuvaneswari Peetam*), ardent devotees from Syracuse. Our condolences to the bereaved. The last rites were performed by Sri Chaitanyananda Natha. He also performed the 14th day ceremony of Mrs. Gupta of Rochester. In the series on stories for children, Sri Chaitanyananda Natha begins in this issue a narrative about the Koneswaram temple.

DOME CONSTRUCTION IN BUFFALO

Under the guidance of Guruji, volunteers of Gurukul, Buffalo have put together a dome house similar to the one in Devipuram. Here is an account of the project by Srirangaraj Setlur, one of the participants in the construction.

GURUKUL volunteers have constructed a low-cost geo-desic dome in Buffalo similar to the ones developed by Guruji as a cheap, practical and permanent form of housing for residents of poor villages in India.

The actual dome houses to be constructed in India at a cost of about \$500 each, will provide shelter from the elements as well as a new sense of permanence to families in the villages. Since village homes typically consist of stones, mud and dried palm fronds, they often do not last through the monsoon season, and villagers must rebuild, sometimes every year. Even in the absence of calamities, thatched houses need refurbishing frequently. Six prototype houses have already been built at Devipuram, and the design was liked by several people who attended the MahAkumbhAbhishekam. The structure contains no wood, and very little is used during construction. Alternative materials, analysis of the strength of the structure, and making the house energy self-sufficient are among the topics currently being researched.

In a world rapidly being depleted of traditional (non-renewable) sources of energy, it is imperative that large-scale construction should not rely on these precious resources, but rather attempt to use alternative, RENEWABLE energy sources. An ambitious research project is underway to make the geodesic dome energy-self reliant. The key idea is to tap solar power exploiting the dome shape, so that the house can utilize the solar energy incident on it.

The dome built in Buffalo is a demonstration project to research new materials, to attempt to improve the design and consider schemes for energy self-sufficiency. It is also hoped that enough

interest and publicity can be generated by this project to involve other experienced and knowledgeable researchers in this area. The dome measures 24 feet in diameter and has a maximum height of 16 feet.

TIRUKONESWARAM

The island of Sri Lanka has long been associated with one of the greatest epics of Indian mythology, the Ramayana. Ravana, the demon king of the Ramayana, had consecrated 1008 Shiva temples from Jaffna in the North to Matara in the South. Over a period of four thousand years a great many of these temples have receded into tropical jungle and have been erased from the map of Sri Lanka. One of these was Tirukoneshwaram. Perched on the edge of a cliff overlooking the Indian Ocean, Tirukoneshwaram had been a powerful Shiva temple for thousands of years. Because it was exactly on the same longitude as Mount Kailash, “Dakshina Kailasha” was one of its names. The temple at Tirukoneshwaram (“thiri”—three, “kone”—angled or pointed) occupied the central point of a triangle. Tirukoneshwaram has the distinction of having songs composed in its praise by one of the “Nalvar”—“the four”—the famous Tamil saints who lived between the 5th and 9th centuries AD. The only other Shiva temple outside of India to share this honour is Tiruketheeshwaram (see last issue of Sri Chakra).

In 1614, Portuguese soldiers, mingling with devotees during the New Years festival, attacked and demolished the temple. Much of the original edifice was pushed over the cliff into the ocean below. When it was being demolished, the colonel commanding the garrison came across an inscription of stone reading in *part* “*Munne kulakoitan muttum thirupanyai pinne parangi pirripan*”. The inscription accurately foretold the peoples that would rule that land—from the Portuguese, to the Dutch, to the British, to the locals, and prophesied that the rulers who followed would never think of reconstructing the temple. A great fort, Fort Frederick, was built on the edge of the cliff using stones from the temple, and the inscription placed at the entrance to the fort. It is the view of the Saiva Siddhantic scriptures that to destroy a Shivalayam (an abode or temple of Shiva) is to invite immediate destruction. Interestingly enough, a few weeks after the temple was demolished, the entire garrison, including its commander Constantine De Saa, were ambushed in the tropical jungles of Uva near Badulla, and destroyed to a man by the fifth column of patriots led by a Kandyan chieftain, Keppitipola Dissawa.

Several Tamil leaders starting with Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan and Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam and later luminaries such as Dr. Balendra and Sir Kandiah Vaidyanathan were deeply involved in trying to resurrect and reconstruct the temple at Tirukoneshwaram. In the early fifties, a “Koneshwaram Reconstruction Committee” was formed by the Hindu

Board of Srilanka. The committee decided that a new temple should be constructed at the site of the original, inside the fort. The fort at that time was controlled by the newly independent government of Ceylon. The Government, led by Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake and British Governor General Lord Soulbury consented to the plan. The day after official permission for the reconstruction plan was granted, a couple of labourers digging a well in the town of Trincomalee (derived from Thirikonamalai) as part of a Municipal building project struck something metallic with their hoes. Careful excavation of the site brought out what turned out to be the procession statues of the ancient temple—and exquisitely cast, almost two feet tall, Samaskanda Shiva, his consort Parvathi, and an infant Shanmukha. It was as though the Lord of Koneshwaram Himself had approved the decision to build the new temple. The statues were mounted on a specially modified Jeep and taken to every town and village in Ceylon where Hindus lived, to collect funds for the temple. I was an eight year old boy living with my family in Bandarawela, my birthplace, when the ancient statues were brought to the Subramanya temple close to our house. I vividly remember the reverence on my mother's face when our family received the *moorthies* with *puṇakumbham* on their way to the temple. I still remember a knot forming at my throat at the sight of the statues, still partially encrusted with earth.

It is very likely that the priests of the old temple had spirited the *moorthies* away and buried them upside down to prevent their falling into Portuguese hands. The

Nataraja idol that must have been in the dance hall of the original temple has not been located to this day. It may be that being too large to be moved, it fell into the hands of Portuguese and was subsequently melted for its gold content. Among the other idols that were in the old temple, the Subrahmanya vigraha is believed to be in the "Villundi Kandaswamy" temple in Trincomalee and a Devi statue in the Shiva temple in the town of Tambalakamam.

The new temple was built under the direction of Sri Chandrashekarendra Saraswati Swamikal, the erstwhile Paramacharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham. When I was in my twenties and a student of architecture in the University of Ceylon, Colombo, I was involved with the efforts of Swami Shiva Sacchidananda Mataji, my first Guru, to have the temple and all of Fort Frederick declared a sacred area. The object was to protect the serenity and sanctity of the new temple from external disturbances. During this period, I had the opportunity to review various Government agent diaries for the major towns in the eastern province of Sri Lanka, where the temple is located. These diaries are supposed to accurately and completely record all Government transactions pertaining to public and private properties. The late Dr. Paranavitane, the then Archaeological Commissioner of Sri Lanka was trying to persuade the Government that the Fort belonged to the Buddhists and that the name Tri Konamalai was derived from

Tri-Gona-Mali, taking its name from a Buddhist monastery named "Gokarna vihare" that purportedly had existed at that site. Surprisingly the Government agent diaries were devoid of any reference to the Koneshwaram Temple. In fact, many pages had been removed without any explanation. On inquiry, we were met with a stone wall of silence from the civil authorities. The diaries spanning about hundred and thirty years were silent on the temple and the scores of people who had visited the site to stand in silent prayer and listen to the music of the waves breaking against the cliff.

Once our efforts got underway, suddenly some vandals chiselled away the Kulakodan inscription and the Pandya inscription—with its telltale twin fish insignia on the entrance to the Fort. That this should happen 400 years after the Portuguese placed the inscriptions there was not lost on the Hindus and smacked of Sinhala Buddhist racism being practised by the Government.

Today, the temple has remained without puja for three years, sealed by the Government of Sri Lanka, much like the temple at Tiruketheeshwaram. Sri Lankan armed forces are stationed within the Fort and behave like an army of occupation in the two provinces, hidden from the eyes of the media and the world community. — 'Ayya'