



Ālaya Vāṇī

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*"The more love you give
others, the more love you receive
from them. the more you pray
for the welfare of others, the more
ensured your welfare will be. May you
have a heart that will shower immense
love on all the people
in the world to their
heart's content;
may you be
blessed with the
magnanimity to pray
for the welfare of all."
-Swami Vivekananda*

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**Message from the Secretary/Treasurer
The Council of Hindu Temples of North America**

Dear Friends,

Namaste & Greetings.

The annual meeting of the Council of Hindu Temples was held at Śri Śiva Vishnu Temple, Lanham, MD in April 2012. For the first time in several years nearly 20 Temples participated and the interest and enthusiasm expressed by participating Temples was indeed very encouraging. The momentum generated in Maryland, should be maintained so that the Council can be an effective and a strong voice for all Temples.

The tragedy at the Gurudhwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin has brought the Hindu & Sikh community closer and prompted the Council to approach DHS for advice and guidance for the safety and security of Hindu Temples. The Council can play a great role not only to protect the interests of Hindu temples in the US, but also help preserve Hinduism and work closely with other faith based institutions.

Once again we appeal to all the Temples to join hands and become members of the Council and participate in the meetings. Representatives of the Temples can share their experiences, thus helping other Temples, particularly the upcoming new ones.

Annual meeting 2013 of the Council will be scheduled at the end of April 2013. Details will be sent out in the near future.

Dr. Uma Mysorekar
President, *Śri Mahā Vallabha Ganapati Devasthanam*,
Flushing, NY

**Summary of the Annual meeting of the Council of
Hindu Temples of North America (CHTNA) held on
April 21st, 2012 at Śri Śiva Vishnu Temple, Lanham, MD**

- Participated by 20 Temples.
- Membership drive discussed in detail. Recommendations included; need for preparation of marketing brochure/flyers and personal contacts with Temple Management.
- Benefits for the new/existing member Temples of CHTNA discussed.
- Presentation by an attorney on legal issues in the management of Temples - This was an informative presentation and covered a variety of subjects of great importance in the management of Temples. There included Priest issues (such as housing), crisis management, Trustees response, etc.
- Presentation on R1 Non Immigrant Religious Worker Visa. The attorney stressed the importance of proper documents in filing for Religious R1 Visa. R1 Visas are valid for 5 years after which the individual must return to home country for 1 year before being eligible to reapply for R1 Visa. He also said that the term of 5 years excludes the time spent outside of the US by the individual (such as vacation, etc.) Religious vocation also includes Artisans and Cooks. For religious vocations other than Priests it is important to document well and maintain proper records.
- North American Panchangam - The value of the North American Panchangam was explained briefly along with the application and the importance of Thitis and Nakshatras.
- Life & Medical insurance for medial employees There were discussions about common group medical insurance for employees of all Temples. Such a possibility may be explored.
- Joint Session with Youth - A youth member of Sri Venkateswara Temple (Pittsburgh, PA) gave a presentation of her experience as a youth member getting involved in Temple activities and lack of interest by some of her peers / friends in such activities. One of the ways to get youth involved in Temple activities is through Seva or service to the community.
- Work Assignments for 2012-2012 wer discussed and given to the member Temples.
- A new website "www.chtna.org" is established and will be updated at regular intervals. All the activities of the Council will be posted on the website.



**MEMBERSHIP APPEAL
TO ALL THE TEMPLES**

PLEASE JOIN AND BE A PART OF THE COUNCIL OF HINDU TEMPLES OF NORTH AMERICA BY BECOMING A MEMBER AND MAKING THE COUNCIL A STRONG BODY REPRESENTING ALL THE TEMPLES. THE COUNCIL CAN HAVE A POWERFUL VOICE IN DEALING WITH ISSUES SUCH AS RELIGIOUS WORKERS VISAS, ETC - COMMON CONCERN OF ALL TEMPLES.

For Further Information regarding membership form and dues, Please call the Secretariat of The Council - Dr. Uma Mysorekar
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**Council Meeting 2012
at Śri Śiva Vishnu Temple, Lanham, MD**



**WINNERS & PARTICIPANTS of the
ESSAY COMPETITION
2011-2012 conducted by
The Council of Hindu Temples
of North America**

The top two winners in each category were :

College -

- ♦ Nancy Desai
- ♦ Arani Nandakumar

High School -

- ♦ Ramya Gopalakrishnan
- ♦ Pearl Subramanian

Middle School -

- ♦ Swathi Balaji
- ♦ Shyamala Subramanian

The participants in each category were:

Middle School -

- Swathi Balaji
- Harsha Muddu
- Sameer Shah
- Paridhi Sonkiya
- Shyamala Subramanian

High School -

- Anuja Desai
- Ramya Gopalakrishnan
- Pearl Subramanian
- Pari Vijay

College -

- Sudha Rao
- Katyayani Cherukumilli
- Nancy Desai
- Arani Nandakumar

**The Council members congratulate all the
participants and winners for their interest and dedication.**



**ANNUAL COUNCIL
MEETING OF 2013**

will be held in April/May 2013

LOCATION TO BE ANNOUNCED

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING MEETING CONTACT
SECRETARY/TREASURER - DR. UMA MYSOREKAR
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ŚRI MAHĀ VALLABHA GANAPATI DEVASTHĀNAM
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MAHĀ RUDRA YAJNAM

Thursday, May 24th thru Monday, May 28th, 2012
Śri Mahā Vallabha Ganapati Devasthānam, Flushing, NY

MAHĀ RUDRAM

Vedic hymns are recited daily as a prayer to the Lord. Of these, the *Śata Rudriya*, popularly known as *Rudram*, is one of the most widely chanted. This is from the fourth of the seven cantos of *Yajur Taittiriya Samhita* of the *Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda*. *Rudram*, in which the most sacred *Śiva Panchākshara Mantram* is embedded, is not only chanted during daily prayers, but also when *Abhishekam*, *Japam* or *Homam* is offered on auspicious occasions.

Besides it being a hymn of prayer, the *Śata Rudriya* is rightly called *Rudropaniṣad* as it performs the same function of an *upanishad* - revealing that the Lord is not separate from the devotee. It also gets the devotee ready to receive this knowledge, which is essential for spiritual growth. This is also said to free us from emotional upheavals in our life.

Śata Rudriya is divided into two sections: *Namakam* with the repetition of *namo*, and *Chamakam* with the repetition of *cha* and *me*. *Namakam*, consisting of eleven *anuvākas* or chapters, seeks the Lord's forgiveness and appeals for His compassion. *Chamakam*, also consisting of eleven *anuvākas*, seeks His blessings for fulfillment of desires. Eleven is an important number as there are eleven different forms of *Rudras* or *Śivas*.

When *Rudram* chanting is accompanied with a Vedic fire ritual *Yajña*, it is a *Rudra Yajña*. *Mahā Rudra Yajna*, *Rudram* is chanted 1,331 times and one tenth (133) *āhutis* (offerings) are made unto the *homa kunda* (fire pit). Participating in this significant and grand five-day-long *Maha Rudra Yagna* is a rare opportunity.

Mahā Rudra Yajña organized for *Loka Kalyāna* and *Kshema*, helps to get rid of all sins, and improves the general welfare of devotees, their families, and the community at large, and prays for Universal peace and prosperity.

OM NAMAḤ SHIVĀYA



Women's Roles in Hinduism

by:
Ramya Gopalakrishnan

Women in all societies through history have tried to gain a greater role in their community, religion, or country. Women have done the same in Hinduism, though their roles have been laid out in texts such as the *Laws of Manu* and the *Dharma-Sastras*. The *Laws of Manu*, also known as *Manusmṛiti*, are a set of basic principles stating how one should lead a dharmic life. The *Dharma-Sastras* explain one's religious and legal duties. These texts were followed more strictly many years ago, but their prominence has declined over time due to circumstance. Nevertheless, there are some principles people inevitably still follow.

Unlike many western religions, Hinduism is not just a religion but also a way of life. Family plays an important role in people's lives and as the keeper of the household, a woman's role would be vital in the tradition. According to Hinduism, a woman is a form of energy, *shaktiswarupini*, or an aspect of *Shakti*. She has three roles of being a child, wife, and mother. As a child she is *Kanya*, the goddess *Durga*. As a wife she is *Pathni* and *Sahadharmacharini*, a partner in her husband's religious duties. As a mother she is a *devi*, the auspicious one, and is worthy of worship. (*matrudevobhava*).

Historically, the female cycle in Hinduism has been different from that of males. In the classical, medieval and most of the modern periods females have followed a three-stage pattern. The *Laws of Manu* specify that a woman should be adorned and honored by her father, brother, son, and brother-in-law if they sought for their own welfare. It declares "*Where women are honored, there the gods are pleased. Where they are not honored, no sacred rite yields rewards.*" In those days, women were required to be present at the time of a religious ritual, though they would not officially take part in the service. Manu goes on to say "*Day and night, women must be kept dependent to the males of their families. Her father protects her in childhood. Her husband protects her in youth. Her sons protect her in old age. A woman is never free for independence.*" In this last judgement, Manu implies the three-stages of a woman's life and how she must be under their watchful eyes at any point during her life.

The woman's main duties come when she is at the wife and mother stage. As a wife, a Hindu woman was expected to live up to the ideals of the *Sthri-Dharma*, the duties of the good wife. She is to revere her husband as the Lord. Her responsibilities are to bear his children and educate them in

their traditional practices. She must serve him, follow him, and only after he eats may she eat. She shares his karma and destiny. For this reason she sometimes fasts, and goes on pilgrimages to ensure her husband's long life and success. If he dies prematurely, it was often regarded as her responsibility or her bad karma. The husband in turn should provide his wife any material needs, security, and social status. He must also regard her as a goddess. This reinforces Manu's statement "*Where women are honored, there the gods are pleased.*"

In Hindu culture, the mother is the very embodiment of love, sacrifice, selfless service to her children, and of forbearance. She is considered the first teacher of every child, and is regarded as the highest Guru. Her role as a mother is primarily devoted to the upbringing of her children and ensuring their comfort. She is also busy in up keeping the household. Her duties interlace with those of being a wife. The importance of the mother in the family is greater than any other. Hindu scriptures say "*The mother must be served by her son even if she is deemed an outcast in the society.*" This embodies her significance in one's life. Motherhood is one of the most important parts of being a woman and it is after being a mother you experience not only the wide variety of emotions but also achieve your full potential.

In a changing world, Hindu society is trying to redefine the role of women in the institution of family and society. Unlike the customs back then, women today have more freedom starting at a very young age. They are not put under the same pressures for certain services that do not fit the modern society. Women are showing a greater representation in politics and science today than they did years ago. This is also due to the fact that women are eligible for the same education men are and no gender segregations are present.

Hindu women have enjoyed the rights they have received and are treated better than women in other religions. Although a few duties Hindu women have that may seem a bit extreme, the acknowledgement they receive as a mother compensates for all of those discomforts. It is understandable that today not all the roles are being carried out to their extremities. They are followed up to a certain extent until which they seem unreasonable to most people. It is said that a dharmic person is one who carries out all their duties throughout the duration of their life. Therefore, Hinduism gives a fulfilling life for a woman who follows these essential roles.

2011-12 High School Winning Essay