

Śrī Medhā Dakṣiṇāmūrti Jīrnoddhāra Kumbhābhiṣekam

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA

June 29, 30 & July 1, 2018

The jīrnoddhāra kumbhābhiṣekam of Śrī Medhā Dakṣiṇāmūrti Temple was performed at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania on Sunday, July 1, 2018. The jīrnoddhāra kumbhābhiṣekam was performed adhering to the rigor of all the religious rituals as per the Vedic tradition under the guidance of Pujya Swami Veditātmānanda Saraswati. The religious proceedings conducted for three days (June 29-30 and July 1st) were expertly coordinated by the temple priests, Śrī. Ravichandran and Śrī. Ganesan. About 14-16 learned priests from various parts of the U.S. assembled on all the three days to conduct

the ceremonies consisting of various śānti karmas and puṣṭi karmas. The catvāra kāla pūjās included Gaṇeśa pūjā, Dakṣiṇāmūrti mūla mantra japa, viśeṣa dravya homādayaḥ, jayādi homa, pūrṇāhuti, divyopacāra pūjā, and dīpārādhana. In addition, there were specific rituals such as ācārya/ṛtvik varaṇam, punyāhavācanam, agni-pratiṣṭhāpanam, yāgaśālā-vāstu-ārādhana, navagraha-devatā and dvārapālaka ārādhana, devatā anujñā, kalaśa-ākarṣaṇam, rakṣoghnaḥoma, mṛt-saṅgrahaṇam, ankurārpaṇam, yātrā dānam, sparśāhuti, and nāḍi-sandhānam. A succinct and adequate summary of each ritual was given by priest Sri. Kasiram Ramakrishna Dikshitar of Philadelphia. On the evening of the second day, the utsava mūrti was carried around the gurukulam premises in a procession to the accompaniment of live nādasvaram by vidwans from the Sri Bhakta Anjaneya Temple, Maryland. On the third day, devotees carried 72 kalaśas energized with the mantras to the temple for the abhiṣekam. At the prescribed muhūrtam of 10:45 AM, Swami Veditātmānanda Saraswati along with priest Śrī. Ravichandran went up on a crane to perform the kumbhābhiṣekam to the ālaya vimānam. The abhiṣekam to Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Lord Siddhi Vināyaka inside the temple was done at 11:15 AM. This was followed by the mahābhiṣekam to Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti with various dravyas and at the end with the waters from all the 72 kalaśas. A 15 min video of the prior three kumbhābhiṣekams (1990, 2002 & 2013) were shown as a 'walk down memory lane.' Pujya Swami Veditātmānanda Saraswati spoke on the significance of the kumbhābhiṣekam during the viśeṣa alaṅkāram. This was followed by mahā dīpārādhana, mantrapuṣṭam, and āśirvādam. All the assembled devotees received the prasādam from Swami Veditātmānandaji and partook in the anna dānam.



The kumbhābhiṣekam was celebrated in a grand manner, thanks to many sponsors who came forward in a short notice to support the event. Notwithstanding another concurrent program at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, the entire kumbhābhiṣekam function was executed efficiently with love and attention by the Gurukulam staff under the leadership of Śrī. Suddhatma. Through the efforts of Śrī.Sahadev, Śrī. Suresh Venugopal and Śrī. Ram Raman, the entire three-day event was broadcast through live event streaming for the benefits of devotees who were not able to attend the function in person. Śrī. Kartik Patel and Śrī. Bala Prasanna captured the kumbhābhiṣekam celebration for posterity by their nonintrusive photography.

¹Report prepared by Dr. V. Swaminathan of Bridgewater, New Jersey.

Swami Veditātmānanda Saraswati's address:

The kumbhābhišekam rituals infuse life into the mūrti such that what was a piece of stone or a metal before becomes an altar of worship after the process. This the beauty of Hindu dharma. Hindus are ridiculed as 'idol worshippers'. We worship a mūrti which has become an altar through a series of meaningful rituals. This is, in fact, a distinguishing feature of the vaidika dharma. The word 'hindu' is a foreign word for us. Our dharma is a vaidika dharma. Sanātana dharma is also an accurate description. The altar helps us to develop a personal relationship with Īśvara. We have the concept of an iṣṭa devatā, a chosen deity, a form for which we have reverence. Every devatā is a manifestation of Īśvara. Hindus are also ridiculed for worshipping too many devatās. Unfortunately, these criticisms reach our children and they are confused. Regrettably, Hindus are ill informed and/or misinformed. Not knowing or wrongly knowing the tenets of the sanātana dharma, we get influenced and/or perplexed by the accusations of the Hindu religion. This is a tragedy. The sanātana dharma is, in fact, the most ancient, exalted and sophisticated tradition. The preparation of the altar, as evidenced in the kumbhābhišekam, shows the refinement in relating to Īśvara, who in the words of pūjya Swāmi Dayānanda, is both the maker and material of the creation. Īśvara indeed manifests as the universe. It is easy to think that the omniscient, omnipotent Īśvara is separate from us and resides somewhere else. This notion only justifies our insignificance and the division between the worshipped and the worshipper. The devotee, separate from Īśvara, willingly accepts his/her smallness and limitations as the reality and subsequently makes no attempt to overcome that limitation. Even if one goes to paradise, one remains limited only.

The vaidika dharma teaches that the maker and the material of the universe is one non-dual reality. As pūjya Swāmiji eloquently says, "we not only worship one Īśvara, we worship only Īśvara. What is, is Īśvara." In other words, every thing in the creation, including the body-mind-sense complex of the individual, is Īśvara. Īśvara is not in some place else. One has to grow to the point to recognize that one is non separate from Īśvara. The Vedas give us this challenge to own up to our reality. One may ask if one is non separate from Īśvara, then who is worshipping whom. That 'I am non separate from Īśvara,' is not a reality for me right now. We accept our current notion of who we perceive ourselves to be. The worshipper is ignorant of his/her reality and takes oneself to be limited and relates to the limitless at an altar. One has to slowly grow out of the limitations to recognize and own up to the limitless self. Appropriate means are given to us to reach this goal. We begin from where we are. The Vedas recognize every type of adhikārī who has to ultimately gain the maturity to free oneself from the sense of limitations.

The worship of Īśvara is identifying with Īśvara. With the human mind neither the omniscient and omnipotent Īśvara nor the Īśvara who transcends all the qualities can be visualized. The Śivamahimnastotram says, "katividhaguṇaḥ kasya viṣayaḥ | pade tvarvācīne patati na manaḥ kasya na vacaḥ || - How many qualities does He possess? By whom can He be perceived? Yet, whose mind and speech do not turn to the (saguṇa) form (arvācīna) taken by Him?" One can relate to Īśvara in any of the incarnate form. We have many forms of Īśvara coming down to us traditionally over the millennia. Of course, one can invoke Īśvara in any form as Pūjya Swāmiji said that even a milestone on the road side can be an altar. Nevertheless, we are given many forms that are visualized by the minds of the riṣis and that have been time tested. Every form is special, having its own method of worship (rituals), alaṅkāra (dress), naivedyam (offering) etc.

²A summary of Swāmiji's talk is given here.

Another usual criticism that is lodged against Hinduism is that the methods of worship are varied and consist of many rituals. People are allergic to the word 'ritual.' A ritual is nothing but a systematic way of performing an action. Even a simple thing like making coffee in the Indian style, is a serious ritual, consisting of many critical steps. Any one travels by air can appreciate the umpteen number of steps that have to be executed sequentially before boarding the plane! One must recognize that one cannot carry out any action without a ritual. A ritual associated with worship is also the same thing, an action at the level of the physical body, speech and mind. It prescribes a methodical way of relating to Īśvara and gives us a structure for expressing our devotion. A religious ritual requires a form that goes with the spirit of worship.

Such nuances in the worship are in fact, the glories of the vaidika dharma. We should consider ourselves to be most fortunate to be born in this tradition. We are given the opportunity and choice to identify with Īśvara and discover our limitless nature. The more worship offered to the deity, the more powerful it becomes. We benefit from that worship. To be a witness to the kumbhābhiṣekam rituals and listen to the mantras is a great privilege. I was present at the first kumbhābhiṣekam in 1990 and was not here during the 2002 and 2013 kumbhābhiṣekams. I consider it my privilege to be present at this jīrnoddhāra kumbhābhiṣekam.

Pūjya Swāmiji considered that the pūjā, either at one's home or at a temple, is the most effective way to invoke the devotee in oneself. In the presence of the Lord, who is limitless and all compassion, one feels accepted and secure. Notwithstanding one's blemishes one can be oneself without a façade in the presence of the Lord. One can be a simple and humble person without feeling judged. All our Gods are smiling, welcoming the devotees. We must count our blessings that we belong to the tradition of the vaidika dharma which is rich and sophisticated. We have a powerful altar here in the form of Śrī Medhā Dakṣiṇāmūrti. Let us draw the grace and be blessed with medhā and prajñā.

Om tat sat.

Quotes from Pujya Swamiji's Diary – 1968

February 1968 -

*** Look back, and when you do so, you are in the now. Look ahead, and while doing so, again you are in the now. Look at, aren't you in the now ? 'Now' is the soul of time in which you have your soul.**

*** Teather not the soul with the chords of past and future and then say "I am not free". Snap them there in which you have your soul.**

*** Is there a there? And when such a there is known, is it here or there?**

*** When you reach above, it becomes a 'here', and when you go below, it too becomes a 'here'. And when you are here, it is here. If that is so, can you escape from here?**