



Tulsi Vivah



Satyanarayan Puja



Navgrah Puja



Annakut

Manav Seva Mandir (MSM) strives to bring to its members and devotees all the up-to-date information about our activities through this newsletter. While the newsletter so far has adequately served that purpose, we believe there is great potential to turn it into a publication of more substance with a better design and photographs. The issue this week is a first step in that direction. In the next few weeks, we intend to upgrade it in a manner where we will embed video and other links in it. We also plan to strengthen our writing with more substantial background. We welcome your suggestions.

--MSM Management

NOVEMBER 3-4

Temple heralds Diwali and New Year with great joy

The Diwali of 2013, like all Diwalis in the years gone by, brought with it its characteristic resplendence to the Manav Seva Mandir. The days between October end and November beginning saw the temple aglow with both Diwali lamps and festive spirit.



The festivities began with Lakshmi Puja, a ritualistic acknowledgement of the importance of wealth and prosperity to human life. Although the day has come to inaccurately mean worship of wealth, at its core it is about prosperity for all. The mercantile and industrial communities of Gujarat observe the day as a way to remind themselves of both equal distribution and remaining honest custodian of wealth. It is also about ensuring integrity in maintaining accounting books.

Lakshmi Puja primed the devotees for the main celebration of Diwali followed by the Gujarati New Year. The temple came alive with both celebration and devotion as a large number of people gathered here offering Aartis. In keeping with India's ancient heritage, it was a grand mix of joy and reflection; joy at the festivities and reflection over how to improve one's conduct toward fellow humans. The temple devotees showed their unflinching generosity when it came to making donation for Diwali and New Year.

NOVEMBER 9

Delicious celebration of Annakut



Annakut, which is also known as Govardhan Puja, celebrates Lord Krishna's victory over Lord Indra. The day is celebrated by offering a choice of sumptuous food. Anna means food/grain and kut means a small hill.

The ancient belief holds that on this day Krishna held aloft the Govardhan Hill to shelter from a deluge caused by Indra, who is regarded as the God of Rain and Thunderstorms. Grateful for their protection devotees have been offering a rich variety of food to Krishna for millennia. The temple organized a beautiful Annakut celebration on November 9. With devotees bringing in different kinds of food, the temple priests found a great opportunity to lay the dishes out in an attractive pattern. The Govardhan Puja started at 5.30 in the evening and concluded two hours later. The visitors then performed the traditional circumambulation. Even on normal days, the temple serves delicious Prasad but on this day with tasty food overflowing, they had a particularly fulfilling time.

NOVEMBER 16

Temple reverberates with Tulsi Vivah festivities

Tulsi Vivah is a charming part of Hinduism. Tulsi, the plant known as holy basil, is at the heart of Hindu belief system. The aromatic plant, also known for its varied medicinal and curative qualities, is found in a vast number of Hindu homes. The visitors to MSM cannot help but notice one right in the center of the entrance hall.

Performed in the Hindu month of Kartik, Tulsi Vivah or Tulsi's Wedding is prevalent in many parts of India. In Gujarat too, it is celebrated with great fanfare. Tulsi, according to legend, was in fact a woman



named Vrinda who was married to the great demon king Jalandar. Vrinda was devoted to Krishna/Vishnu. Her devotion to someone other than himself riled Jalandar. He embarked on a rigorous penance and was eventually blessed with invincible powers by the gods. Jalandar chose to misuse his powers to take on the gods. Concerned about Jalandar's menace Lord Shiv told Vishnu/Krishna to vanquish and eliminate him. As part of a plan, Vishnu/Krishna took the form of Jalandar and cast a spell on Vrinda. His wife thus weakened Jalandar began to lose his powers and was ultimately destroyed by Shiv.

When Vrinda found out about what Vishnu/Krishna had done, she drowned herself in the ocean. Vishnu/Krishna then transferred her soul to a plant that became Tulsi. The wedding between Vrinda as manifest in the Tulsi plant and Vishnu/Krishna has been performed for a long time. Our own celebration had two families, one representing Tulsi and the other Vishnu/Krishna, take part in the elaborate wedding ceremony. Last year Narendra Patel and his family stood in as Tulsi's parents and Navnit and Ramila Shah were the hosts as Vishnu/Krishna's parents. Some 700 guests enjoyed the ceremony and cheered. The wedding was followed by a grand meal.

NOVEMBER 24

Election for Board of Trustees and Executive Board

As required by the temple's constitution every two years, elections for the Board of Trustees and Executive Board were conducted on November 24. In a measure of the unity among the temple supporters all members were elected unopposed. The members were administered the oath of their office on January 14 in the name of Lord Krishna. The 2013 general body meeting took place on December 8 between 4.30 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. Several issues were discussed, including suggestions to amend the constitution. The by-laws committee decided to review all suggestions and incorporate many of them through 2014.

DECEMBER 16

Gita Jayanti

The Gita Jayanti, that celebrates the message of the great book of Bhagwat Gita ,was celebrated with a collective recitation.

JANUARY 5

Joint Satyanarayan Puja brings 80 participants despite intense cold



2014 began with a mass Satyanarayan Puja. Undeterred by the extreme cold weather caused by the polar vortex some 80 people took part in the Puja. The priests explained to the participants the importance of the Puja as well dwelled on the meaning of its rituals. The two-hour Puja was followed by a special meal.

JANUARY 14

Makar Sankranti and Navgrah Puja

Makar Sankranti, or the transition of the Sun into zodiac constellation of Capricorn, is one of the most widely observed festivals in India and Nepal. It also marks the onset of Spring and some harvest.

The day is celebrated with in two distinct ways. One is to make offerings to nine celestial bodies as part of the Navgrah Puja. The celestial bodies are represented through beautiful patterns made with specific grains on cloths of specific colors. (See the picture on the right). The second distinct aspect of Makar Sankranti is kite flying throughout the day and often late into the evening after the sunset when lanterns are hoisted on the string tethered to high-flying kites. It creates a spectacular scene in the day and night sky. The temple celebrated Makar Sankranti with great enthusiasm with at least 15 hosts taking part in the Navgrah Puja. The Puja is meant as an offering to various planets in the belief that it would ward off bad influences. The evening ended with a feast attended by some 150 guests.



UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2014:

FEBRUARY 27, THURSDAY: MAHA SHIVRATRI CELEBRATIONS



The temple will host its annual Maha Shivratri gathering with traditional celebrations and Shiv Puja at four specific intervals of 6 p.m., 9 p.m., 12 midnight and 3 a.m. A milk abhishek will offered all day during the temple hours.

MARCH 16, SUNDAY: HOLI CELEBRATIONS AND A GATHERING F POETS

The lighting of the Holi fire and a special gathering of poets to mark the colorfully joyous occasion. The festivities will be between 6.30 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

MACH 29, SATURDAY: A Gujarati play will be hosted by the temple. Details are still being worked out.



MARCH 31 TO APRIL 8, FROM MONDAY TO TUESDAY NEXT: RAMAYAN PATH AND RAM NAVMI CELEBRATIONS



Ramayan Path and Ram Navmi celebrations. These nine days mark the daily recitation of the Ram Charitmanas, leading up to the birthday celebrations of Lord Ram on Ram Navmi, April 8. The birthday celebrations will take place between 11 a.m. and Noon.

APRIL 14: HANUMAN JAYANTI

Hanuman Jayanti celebrations. Hanumanji puja will start at 5 p.m., followed by the recitation of the Sundarkand. Mahaprasad will be served after Aarti at 7.30 p.m. Those who want to be Yajmans may contact the temple office.

