

HSGC Celebrates Balalaya Prathistapana Mahotsavam

by Raghavan Pandalai

On Friday-Saturday, May 2-3, 1998 the Hindu community of Greater Cincinnati celebrated the "Balalaya Prathistapana Mahotsavam" with pomp and religious rigor. It was attended by large number of devotees representing a wide cross section of the community. The installation of Lord Subramanya, Valli and Devyani was conducted with the chanting of vedic mantras and bhajans suitable for the occasion. These deities are a special gift from Satguru Sivayya Subramania Swamy of Hawaii, the well known publisher of Hinduism Today.

It was a well organized function attended by over 200 devotees. Even the heavy rain Friday evening, just after dinner, did not dampen the spirits of devotees who returned on Saturday morning to witness one of the most auspicious functions ever held at the Cincinnati temple. This was the culmination of the dreams and aspirations of a lot of our people who worked tirelessly for more than a year to make it happen. Now by the God's grace, that task has been completed, and we can move on with regular worship and maintenance of our religious and cultural heritage for a long time to come.

An important part of the function was the **Navagraha Homam** on Friday evening, and **Kumbhabhishekam** and **Alankaram** of the deities on Saturday, followed by a sumptuous lunch for all attendees. The function was supervised by seven punditjis who had their hands full with the various tasks including chanting and reciting vedic mantras, conducting poojas, and other auspicious tasks usually conducted in connection with any deity installation ceremony.

During Kumbhabhisheka sanctified water from the *kumbhas* is used for bathing the *Murthis* followed by *Panchamrita Thirumanjanam* in which the

Murtis are bathed in milk, yogurt, honey, ghee and sugar in that order. Needless to say, it was a wonderful experience. The priests also dressed the deities in Sarees, and decorated them beautifully with flowers, sandalwood paste, and other items required for holy rituals followed back in India. By the looks on their faces it appeared that the deities were also enjoying this momentous occasion.

For those interested in a bit of history, like Lord Ganesha, Lord Subramanian or Karttikeya as He is affectionately called, is the son of Shiva and Parvathi. He is also known by other names such as "Murugan" or "Murukan" and is worshipped in Tamil Nadu with particular reverence and divinity. If Ganesha was created by Parvathi, Karttikeya was the creation of Lord Shiva, nurtured by Agni, Ganga and Kritikas in turn. Karttikeya was the commander in chief of the celestial army and defeated three well known Asuras, Taraka, Simhamukha, and Surapadman (all three were sons of Maya and Sage Kashyapa) to free the Devas from slavery.

After defeating Surapadman however, Lord Karttikeya made him assume two forms- one of a peacock to serve as a vehicle to the Lord and another of a cock to adorn His flag post. Seated on his *vahana* or vehicle, the peacock, Karttikeya is the symbol of youth, beauty and valor. The story of Karttikeya is found in the Mahabharata, Ramayana and in the Puranas.

Congratulations to Mrs. Geeta Shankar and her volunteers for all the multitudes of work needed to be completed to make the event possi-

ble and enjoyable to every one. They deserve special commendation for an excellent job well done in record time, we were able to enjoy every minute of this function.

We also take this opportunity to congratulate the Lord Subramanya Committee and the Executive Council of HSGC for taking up this work and completing them in record time. May God bless them all for an excellent job.

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