



Sri Lakshmi Temple



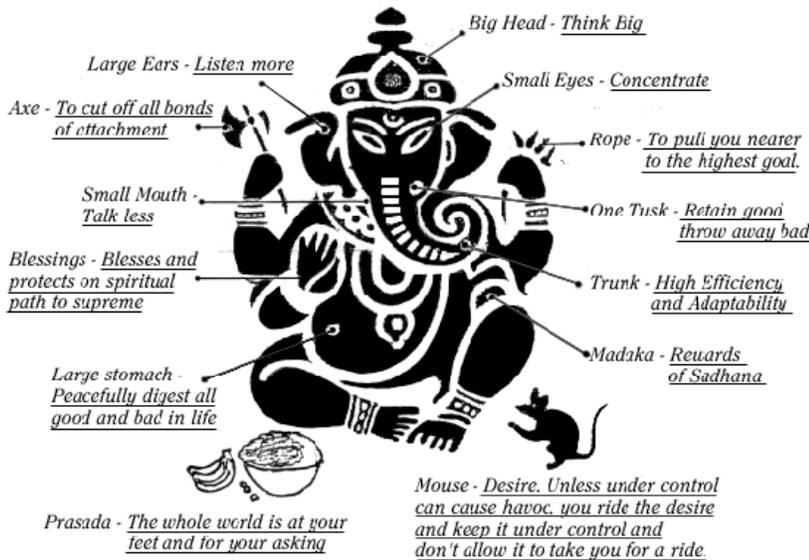
(A Unit of New England Hindu Temple Inc.)

117 Waverly Street, Ashland, MA 01721

Phone: 508-881-5775 Web: www.SriLakshmi.org



Ganesha Symbolism



Shuklaambara Dharam Vishnum Shashi Varnam Chatur Bhujam Prasanna Vadanam Dhyaayet Sarva Vighna Upashaanthaye

We meditate on God Sri Ganesha - who is clad in white (representing purity), who is all pervading (present everywhere), whose complexion is gray like that of ash (glowing with spiritual splendor), who has four arms, who has bright countenance (depicting inner calm and happiness) and who can destroy all obstacles (in our spiritual and worldly path).

Vakratunda Mahakaaya Suryakoti Samaprabha Nirvighnam Kuru Mey Deva Sarva Kaaryeshu Sarvada

The Sri with the curved trunk and a mighty body, who has the luster of a million suns, I pray to thee Oh God, to remove the obstacles from all the actions I intend to perform.

Agajaanana Padmaarkam Gajaananam Aharnisham Anekadantham Bhaktaanaam Ekadantam Upasmahey

I worship day and night that elephant faced God Ganesha who is like sun to the lotus face of Mother Parvati. Giver of many boons to your devotees, the single tusked Ganesha, I salute Thee.

Soruce for sloka: <http://www.eaisai.com/baba/docs/slганеш.html>

Siddhi Vinayaka Vrata A vow-based worship and meditation of Ganesha is performed on the fourth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Bhadrapada. On this day - which is Ganesh Chaturthi (Chaturthi is 4th day which comes after the new moon), the day of the birthday festival of Ganesha -- people carefully avoid looking at the Moon. As part of the Siddhi Vinayaka vrata (vow), they get up early in the morning, take bath in water mixed with **til** or sesame seeds, worship Ganesha in an earthen or metallic image, and observe a fast. They are reassured that even if they see the Moon on that day, by mistake or otherwise, they will not suffer adverse effects if they listen to the story of the Syamantaka gem.

Ganesha's curse on the Moon: Ganesha once partook of a huge meal of modaka (the sweet greatly favoured by him) and was riding home on his vehicle, the mouse. Suddenly, the mouse was tripped by a snake. Ganesha fell off the mouse and his over-full stomach burst open and out tumbled the modakas. The Moon saw him. The Moon, very handsome, was proud of his appearance. On seeing the elephant-faced, big-bellied Ganapati riding on a rat, he laughed at him mockingly.

This insult made Ganesha angry. He pronounced a curse: "Oh Moon, your handsome appearance has made you too vain. Fool, I am worshipped in all the worlds, but you laugh at me. Receive now the fruits of your foolish pride. Let your beauty, which is the cause of your arrogance and ignorance, vanish! From now on, whoever sees you on the fourth day of the bright fortnight of Bhadrapada month, the day of my birth, will suffer because of unjust accusations."

The curse shattered the Moon's pride. He realized his mistake, and felt sorry. Standing devotedly with folded hands, he prayed to Ganesha: "Sri, forgive me and my ignorance. Take back the curse and protect me." Then the kind Ganesha grew calm. He consoled the Moon, saying: "You have realized your fault. What is important is the destruction of pride. Anyhow, my curse cannot be in vain. But those who are subjected to false accusations will be saved and regain their good name if they see you on the second day of the bright fortnight also." The Moon was satisfied.



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Sri Krishna and the Syamantaka Gem

The story of the Syamantaka Mani (Gem) is narrated in the Bhagavata and Vishnu Puranas. It shows how powerful the curse of Ganesha is. This story is read on the fourth day of the bright half of the lunar month of Bhadrapada, the day of Ganesha Chaturti. Sri Krishna observed the vrata (vow) mentioned here to redeem himself from the accusation of lying.

In the Dvapara Yuga, Sri Krishna built the beautiful city of Dvaraka on the sea-coast. And there lived in that city a Yadava nobleman named Satrajit who was a devotee of Surya, the Sun deity. While walking on the sea shore one day, he meditated on and ardently worshipped the Sun for a long time. The Surya devata then materialized before him, gifted him with the Syamantaka Mani -- the dazzling divine red ruby He was wearing around his neck, and then disappeared. Satrajit put the gem around his neck. When he entered Dvaraka, everybody was surprised to see the heavenly gift. It was as effulgent as the Sun itself. This gem had the power to produce 1.5 tons of gold each day for its owner. Satrajit would not give it to the Yadava chieftain Ugrasena, even when Sri Krishna exhorted him to do so. However, on one occasion, he gave it to his brother Prasena, who went out hunting with it and was promptly killed by a lion. Jambavan, of Ramayana fame, killed that lion and gave the Syamantaka ruby to his son to play with.

When Prasena did not return to Dvaraka, people started wondering what had happened to him. Satrajit suspected that Krishna might have killed Prasena in order to get the gem. Krishna, in order to prove his innocence, gathered a search party and went into the forest. A few hours later, they found Prasena's body. Krishna noticed lion tracks around the body and assumed that a lion must have killed Prasena. On following its tracks, they came across the body of the dead lion. Krishna noticed that the lion had the marks of a bear's claws and noticed that there were bear tracks around the body. By following the bear tracks, Krishna reached Jambavan's cave. Sensing danger, Krishna ordered the rest of the party to stay outside and entered the cave alone.

Jambavan attacked Krishna, thinking Him to be an intruder who had come to take away the jewel. They fought each other for 28 days, after which Jambavan, his whole body terribly weakened from the hammering of Krishna's fists, finally recognised Him as Rama. He said: "I now know You. You are the life in all creatures, virility, grit and strength. You are Vishnu, the Primeval Sri, All-Prevailing, the Supreme Sri of the Worlds, He Who built a bridge across the ocean that is a standing monument to His fame, set Lanka ablaze, and with His arrows severed the heads of Rakshasas." (Bhagavata 10.56.26) As repentance for his having fought Him, Jambavan gave Krishna the Syamantaka gem and also his daughter Jambavati in marriage. Krishna returned to Dvaraka with Jambavati and the jewel, and returned it to Satrajit. Satrajit now felt ashamed for casting false aspersions on Sri Krishna. He offered his daughter Satyabhama to him as his wife.

The story of Syamantaka does not end here. Satadhanwan and Akrur were two brothers who were jealous of Satrajit for possessing the Syamantaka ruby. Satadhanwan killed Satrajit when he was asleep and snatched the gem from him. Satyabhama told the ghastly story of her father's killing to Sri Krishna.

Satadhanwan passed on the Syamantaka to his brother Akrur and asked him to proceed on a long pilgrimage. Sri Krishna and Balram thought that the gem was with Satadhanwan. When Satadhanwan rode a horse and left the city, they followed him. Krishna killed Satadhanwan and looked for the gem. It was not there. Balram became suspicious of Krishna's designs. He thought that Krishna was greedy and a killer of innocent people. He left Krishna alone and went his own way. When Krishna returned to Dvaraka alone, people again became suspicious. They whispered to each other that Krishna had exiled Balram from Dvaraka for the sake of the gem. Sri Krishna again felt dismayed.

Incidentally, Narada visited Dvaraka at this time. He found Krishna in a sad mood. He asked him about his anxiety. Krishna said, "Respected Narada, people cast aspersions on me. Can I ever steal? Can I ever tell a lie? Am I a man subject to suspicion? I do not know what curse has befallen me. Kindly help and guide me". Narada smiled and said, "You have seen the Moon on the fourth day of the bright half of the lunar month of Bhadrapada. Looking at the Moon on that day is forbidden".

"How is it? People see, appreciate and bow before the Moon on the second day of the bright half of the lunar month. Why are they forbidden from looking at it on the fourth day?" asked Krishna. Narada said: "Sri Ganesha cursed the Moon on that day. Anyone who sees the Moon on that day will be falsely accused. This curse has befallen you."

Sri Krishna asked: "How can I free myself from this curse?" Narada replied: "Observe a fast on every fourth day of the bright half of the lunar month. Worship and make offerings to Sri Ganesh or Siddhi Vinayak. You will be free from this curse." Sri Krishna acted on Narada's advice, observed the vrata, and became free from all aspersions.