



Chinmaya Mission San Jose

e-Newsletter

Maha Shivarathri Update

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The Maha Shivarathri Puja

Lord Shiva's serene smiling face with half-closed eyes, deep in meditation was a contrast to the beehive of activity all around Him in preparation for the celebration of Maha Shivarathri. Sandeepany ashram in San Jose was the venue for the Maha Shivarathri puja this year, as always. What was different was that unlike in the previous years, this time the puja was an all-day event, starting at 6:30AM and concluding at midnight. Also unique this time was the fact that devotees could sponsor the various parts of the puja.



Serene Smiling Face of Lord Shiva



Preparations for the Puja



Swamiji and several devotees present early in the morning helped in the setup



On the Festival Day – February 26th 2006

The auspicious day was filled with a series of pujas. There were two sessions during the day with a few hours break between the two. The worship started with Ganapathi homam and ended with Kramarchana and Aarati. For many days before the event, teams of volunteers were assigned different responsibilities to cover all aspects of the celebration for which hundreds of devotees were expected to attend. Planning the various aspects of the puja and the logistics of putting together the whole event – from parking for the hundreds of devotees, prasad for the attendees, making sure every single item for the puja was available as per Pandit Ravichandran's instructions, arranging flowers and garlands, decorating the ashram, putting together the display for book sales, setting up live video feeds so people could watch the puja from many rooms in the ashram – was done so seamlessly that there was nothing amiss on the day of the puja.



Ganapathi Pooja



The Homam



Purnahuti ...



... and the Aarati

Om Namah Shivaya

Puja Festivities



The Fifteen Decorated Kalashas

Amidst the resonant chanting of Sri Rudram and Shanti Panchakam, water from fifteen decorated kalashas was used for the abhishekam of the Lord. A highlight of the puja was the Kramarchana from the Namakam section of Sri Rudram. This is a stylized method of chanting which required two teams chanting in tandem, just to avoid being overrun by the complexity of the chant!



The two teams chanting in tandem



Abhishekam from the water from the fifteen decorated kalashas

Spatika lingams, brought specially from India, were given as prasad to those who sponsored a complete session of the puja. These small crystal lingams were first consecrated by panditji along with rudraksha malas and the kalashas during the puja. The malas, kalashas, shawls and Gurudev's gold foil portrait were given as prasad to those who sponsored different parts of the puja. All the proceeds from the puja sponsorship went towards the new building fund.



The Lord Adorned after the Abhishekam



Devotees participating in the Maha Shivarathri Celebrations

The Night Time Festivities

The second session of the puja started at 6:30PM with an amazing music program by the Dhvani children. The ashram was almost bursting at the seams that day. Hundreds of devotees came to worship and seek the Lord's grace, and left with the sound of the Vedas ringing in their ears.

Lord Shiva looked resplendent in the light of the numerous lamps shining around him and was decked with several garlands of colorful flowers - the same peaceful countenance smiling indulgently upon the throng of devotees thrilled to see his beautiful form.



The Night Time festivities

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