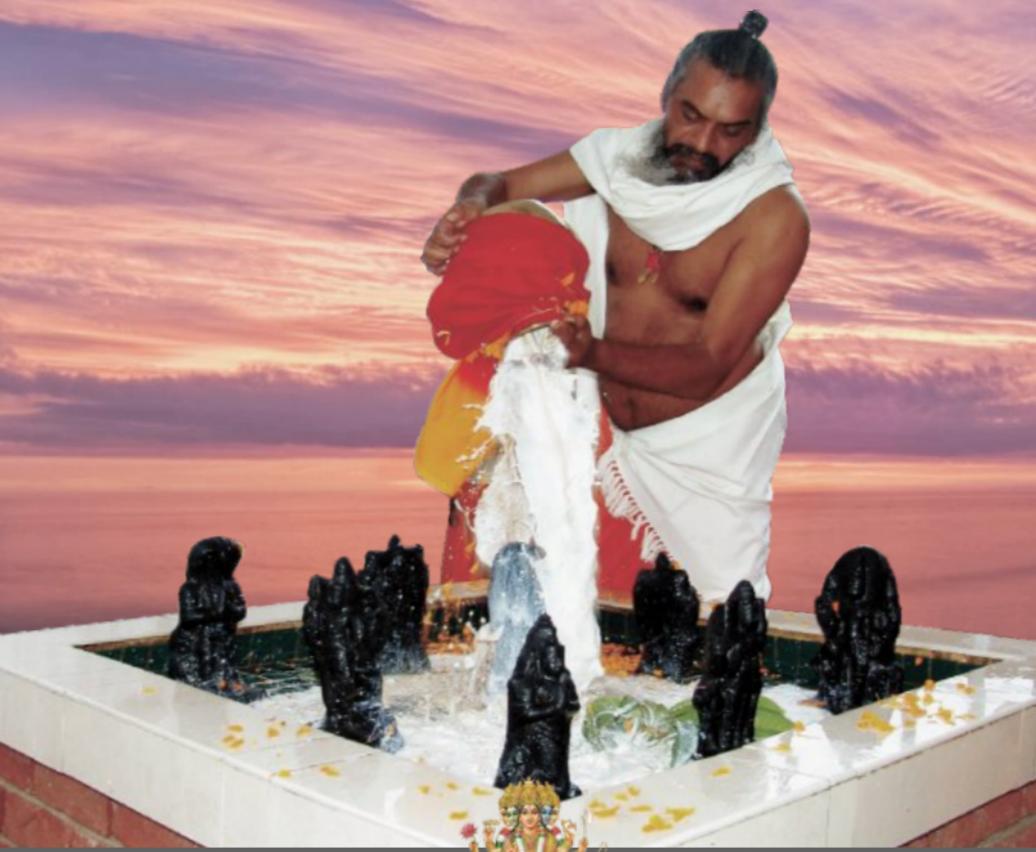


NAVAGRAHA POOJA

Prayer for the nine planets

WITH SWAMI SHANKARANANDA MAHARAJI



Gayathri  Peedam

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

www.gayathripeedam.com

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About the Gayathri Peedam

Peedam means 'seat' and the Gayathri Peedam is considered the seat, or abode, of Divine Mother.

The Gayathri Peedam was founded by Swami Murugesu Maharishi in Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka, where the original temple is still situated in Lady McCallum Drive.

The South African temple is run by Swami Shankarananda Maharajji, direct disciple of Swami Murugesu, and is situated in Verulam at 2 Fairview Drive, Brindhaven, kwaZulu-Natal. It was established in 1985 and functions as a non-profit organisation to assist in fulfilling spiritual needs of the community through prayer, yoga and devotion to God in the form of Divine Mother, Gayathri.

The Verulam Peedam has become an efficient ashram, in its own right and is the only temple in the world boasting two Gayathri murthis (deity statues). It is also the only temple in Africa in which a Babaji Shrine has been installed personally by Yogiaramaiah. Other shrines include a Shiva Mandir, Hanuman Shrine, Navagraha Shrine, Sani Shrine and a Sapta Rishi Lingam Shrine. There are two temples on the property, both containing murthis of Divine Mother in various forms including Kali, Durga, and Lakshmi. Situated above the main temple is an impressive yoga hall where regular yoga classes are held by the Jadatharaya Institute of Right Living and Yoga an initiative of the Gayathri Peedam.

Service is held every Friday evening at 7.00 pm and a full moon pournami pooja and hawan (fire-ceremony) is conducted once a month.

Please visit our website at www.gayathripeedam.com for a complete list of prayer dates for this year.

Understanding the basics of the navagraha pooja

What is navagraha pooja?

Nava means 'nine' and *graha* (sometimes spelled 'ghara') means planetary 'energy', 'force' or 'controller' so navagraha pooja is a prayer ritual performed to energise an individual or family according to the nine planetary forces.

According to modern astronomy, only five of these nine influences are actually planets. Kuja (Mars), Budha (Mercury), Guru (Jupiter), Sukra (Venus) and Sani (Saturn). Surya (the Sun) is a Star, Chandra (the Moon) is a natural satellite, Rahu (north node of the moon) and Ketu (south node of the moon) are not celestial bodies, but polar energies.

When is navagraha pooja performed?

The navagraha prayer is performed at the Gayathri Peedam in Verulam every Saturday morning from 4am onwards. The entire prayer takes approximately 90 minutes per family. Individual families perform each ritual consecutively, in turn.

A mahanavagraha version (greater prayer) is performed by Swami Shankarananda every two to three months, according to the most auspicious planetary situations (these are indicated on the Peedam Calendar). Mahanavagraha takes about 6 to 8 hours to complete as many families attend.

Who can perform navagraha pooja?

The navagraha pooja can be done by anyone, but should be performed especially by business owners, those who are ill, devotees experiencing a negative or challenging period and anyone wanting to reduce malevolent astrological influences in the near future.

The prayer is best performed by all members of an immediate family together, or singularly by an individual sadhak (aspirant) whose immediate family are not involved in the temple.

Friends or associates should not do navagraha together (i.e. wash and offer to the murthis) unless they are married or of the same immediate family. Those you perform the prayer with will have different astrological requirements to you and their energy may affect the outcome of your prayer.

Why should you perform navagraha pooja?

The purpose of the navagraha prayer is to counteract the negative astrological effects of the nine planets. The nine navagraha murthis (effigies, statues) installed in the Gayathri Peedam navagraha Shrine have been energised by specific mantras and prayers to promote the beneficial astrological effects of each planet, and so help to counteract or reduce the potential negative effects in the life of an individual.

How does Navagraha Pooja work?

Each graha is associated with a specific colour and substance, according to their energy frequency. When performing the navagraha pooja, it adds to the efficacy of the prayer to wear the colour pertaining to your planet and, if possible, a navagraha ring, mala or pendant (these can be purchased from the Gayathri Peedam shop) which should be worn on your person at all times for maximum benefit. The temple usually provides devotees with the samaghri (seeds and herbs) associated with each planet which will further add to the success of the prayer.

Calculate your number and colour

Use the following formula to calculate your planetary number:

birth day + birth month + birth year = planetary number.

eg. 15 July 1953 will be calculated as follows:

$1 + 5 + 7 + 1 + 9 + 5 + 3 = 31$, then $3 + 1 = 4$

In this case, 4 is the planetary number of this person.

The planetary colour and substance associations are shown on a chart on the next page.

Planet	No.	Colour	Stone	Day	Grain	Influences
Surya (Sun)	1	Red	Ruby	Sunday	Wheat	Soul
Chandran (Moon)	2	White	Pearl/Moonstone	Monday	Rice	Mind
Kujan (Mars)	3	Red	Red Coral	Tuesday	Red Bean	Ego
Budhan (Mercury)	4	Green	Emerald	Wednesday	Green Bean	Communication
Guru (Jupiter)	5	Yellow	Yellow Sapphire	Thursday	Gram	Wisdom
Sukran (Venus)	6	White	Diamond	Friday	Field Bean	Wealth
Saani (Saturn)	7	Black	Blue Sapphire	Saturday	Black Thil	Career and Longevity
Rahu (N. Node)	8	Dark Blue	Garnet	-	Black Gram	Chaos
Ketu (S. Node)	9	Light Blue	Cat's Eye	-	Linseed	Supernatural forces

The process of navagraha pooja

The process of the basic Navagraha prayer performed every Saturday morning at the Gayathri Peedam is itemised below, with the purpose for each action. Note that the Mahanavagraha is a longer prayer and each Mahanavagraha prayer is slightly different and changes according to instructions given to Swami.



1. Pradhakshinam (circumambulation of the temple)

On arriving, at 4.00am devotees walk around the temple 108 times, clockwise, keeping count with a set of 108 mala beads. The prayer is performed early in the morning to enable more devotees to participate as many have to work later in the morning. Early in the morning, before sunrise, is also one of the preferred times of the day for meditation and spiritual practices as the earth's energy is still quiet and calm. The purpose of walking around the temple is to focus on God as the central point in our lives. Some devotees chant mantras or pray silently during this practice. This usually takes 30 to 40 minutes.



2. Abishekam (washing the murthis)

The navagraha murthis are first washed with water to cleanse them and remove any negative energy. They are then washed with milk and maas, using both hands as the energy with which they are impregnated, is transferred via the hands to the body and subtle energy field. The milk and maas are regarded as an offering to God and are also pure substances, effectively



energised by the murthis. During washing Swami or one of His assistants recite the respective mantra for each murthi and indicate the correct order of washing. Finally, the milk and maas residue is rinsed from the murthis to cleanse and prepare them for the next family.

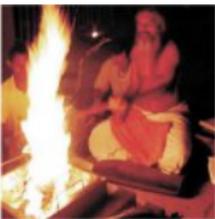
Note: During the washing and rinsing of the navagraha murthis, your supplied container will be filled with the abishegam mixture which should be taken home and used to bath in on the same day to further absorb the beneficial energy of the murthis and mantras.

3. Drying



The murthis are then dried with the new towel you have supplied and which is donated to the temple for cleaning of the ashram. Washing, rinsing and drying of the murthis takes about ten to fifteen minutes. The last family to dry the murthis must dress them in preparation for the offering later on.

4. Hawan (sacred fire ceremony)



Each family then participates in the navagraha hawan during which a mixture of seeds and herbs (samaghri) are offered to the fire while specific mantras are recited by Swami, Tejananda Acharya or a temple assistant. There is a specific seed for each planet, pertaining to the colour and energy of each. The seeds are mixed together and offered to the fire every time the word 'namaha' or 'swaha' is uttered. By the inhalation of the smoke created by the burning of the samaghri, devotees are further energised and cleansed. After the last hawan mantra is recited,

devotees then prostrate in front of the fire to show submission to God and express thanks.



5. Offering to the navagraha murthis

Bananas, betel leaf and flowers are then offered to each planetary murthi in the order indicated, and usually by the family head, while the other family members each touch him (or her) with their right hand in order that all can be connected in performing this act.



6. Prayer to the Mother

A prayer of thanks is then recited to Gayathridevi while the devotee/s face the Mother's temple in front of the navagraha shrine after prostrating before the 10th flower is offered to Surya.



7. Offering to the Mother

The family or sadhak prostrate to Gayathridevi inside the temple, and then walk around the temple three times, clockwise, with their tray of fruit, donation (this is separate from the prayer fee) and milk before placing it at the feet of the Mother. These offerings are used in the temple for general maintenance and community upliftment projects.



8. Arathi

In conclusion arathi is performed by lighting the temple clay lamp and turning it three times each in front of the Gayathri murthi and the other murthis in the temple while the respective mantras are recited. The purpose of this is to acknowledge the light of

God. Finally, each devotee is blessed on the forehead with kungum (a powder usually made from red tumeric) for the purpose of reinforcing retention of the energy absorbed during the prayer.

If you have the time available, please add to the benefit of the prayer by staying behind to help tidy up.



How do I participate?

The Saturday navagraha pooja starts at 4 am and costs R400 per family which is used to purchase samaghri, fire-wood, ghee and covers a small donation to the temple. Please arrive on time to prevent delay for others.

Each family is required to bring with them the following ingredients for the prayer:

- 9 fresh bananas
- 2 litres of Clover milk*
- 500ml of Clover maas*
- 10 flower heads per person
- 9 betel leaf
- a new bath towel
- a container with a lid
- your set of 108 mala beads
- a separate tray of fruit and milk for offering to the Mother at the end of the prayer.



*(Clover milk/maas is rennet free and vegetarian-friendly)

No meat, alcohol or social drugs should be taken for nine days before the prayer. This is to purify the body in order to maximise the positive effect of the prayer.

To put down your name for the prayer, please contact Tejananda Acharya on 032 9444 373 or 081 574 6110 or give your name to Tejananda after Friday evening service.

Email correspondence@gayathripeedam.com for any queries

Understanding mahanavagraha pooja

Maha means 'great' and the mahanavagraha pooja is a much grander version of the usual navagraha. It is performed personally by Swami Shankarananda Maharajji and each prayer is different, depending on the current astrological influences at the time of the prayer. Swami also plans the prayer procedure according to the requirements of specific families who attend.

In addition to the washing of the navagraha murthis, there is a kalsa pushpum pooja for the nine planets and the hawan is often laid out in nine sections, according on the requirements at the time. The prayer is usually conducted every two to three months, depending on the astrological influences prevailing at the time and it starts at 2 am in spring and summer and later on during autumn and winter.

The prayer fee per family is R400 and includes a meal afterwards. As with the regular Saturday navagraha pooja, please give your name to Tejananda if you would like to attend one of the mahanavagraha poojas as the temple can only accommodate a limited number of families. The ingredients to be supplied are the same as for the Saturday Navagraha Pooja unless special instructions are given.

For maximum benefit, devotees should try to attend all the mahanavagraha poojas during the year and one Saturday morning navagraha each month.

Please see the prayer dates link on our website at for dates of upcoming mahanavagraha poojas.



Swami Muguresu Maharishi

Gayathri Siddhar, Swami Dr RK Murugesu Maharishi, a direct disciple of Sri Kanniah Yogi, underwent spiritual training predominantly under the guidance of this master, but also received instruction from a number of other saints and maharishis, continuing

the line of this unique discipline by training sincere truth-seekers to fulfil their spiritual aim, and using the same teaching methods as the secluded maharishis of ancient times.

Swami Murugesu is the founder of the great Gayathri Peedam in Sri Lanka, where he lived. He was a person of simple words but great impact, having devotees all over the world including America, Malaysia, India, Europe and South Africa. Swami Murugesu attained mahasamadhi on 24 September 2007 in the presence of his devoted predecessor, Swami Shankarananda.

Swami Shankarananda Maharajji



Born in South Africa, Swami Shankarananda Maharajji spent his childhood in the coastal town of Port Shepstone where, at the young age of fourteen, Swami's spiritual journey began. During 1994 Swami Shankarananda received some books in the post from a saint he had never met. Two years later Swami found himself travelling to Sri Lanka to meet his guru,

Swami Murugesu Maharishi who initiated him into the Swami order. Since then Swami Shankarananda has founded the Gayathri Peedam in South Africa under Swami Murugesu's instruction and continues today to promote the teachings of his guru by conducting weekly service, poojas, discourses, classes, community service, publishing the spiritual writing of his guru, and overseeing the other Gayathri temples in Sri Lanka

Swami Shankarananda also holds an honorary doctorate in vedic astrology, is a Reiki master, justice of the peace and commissioner of oaths, yet he remains humble, down-to-earth, enthusiastic and always generous in sharing his wisdom and humour.



Gayathri Peedam

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Produced by the Gayathri Peedam of South Africa
as part of a Gayathridevi awareness campaign.

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Non-Profit Number: NPO 010-137

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Fundraising No. 010-137 NPO