

In the *Yāgaśāla*, *Śri Sudaršana* is invoked in *chatusthāna* (four places): *Bimba* (image of *Śri Sudaršana* in front of the Center *Kumbha*), Center *Kumbha* (a *kalaša* or pot, filled with water representing *Śri Sudaršana*), *Chakra Rāja Mandala* (the colorful geometric design), and *Agni Kunda* (the *homa* pit). *Sudaršana Yantra* (a thin copper sheet on which *Sudaršana chakra* (two intersecting triangles) is drawn and superimposed by the image of *Śri Sudaršana*) is also installed.

The central *Kalaša* of *Śri Sudaršana* is surrounded by *kalašas* designated as specific deities. Their divine benevolent spirits are invoked and blessings are sought during the *Śri Sudaršana Mahā Kumbha Sthāpanam*. *Śri Sudaršana Yajna* commences in earnest when the priests offering *āhuti* (melted ghee) into the *homa kunda* (fire pit) while simultaneously chanting the *Śri Sudaršana Māla* and *Moola Mantra*, along with the devotees.

Every *homam* session is concluded with *Poornāhuti* (final and complete offering), and the chanting of *Thiruvārādana* (formal hospitalities) and *Sātumarai*, which are selections from the 4,000 *Divya Prabhandam* verses. These Tamil verses are the essence (*Sāra*) of the *Vedas* (*marai*) written with devotion by the *Āzhvārs* (ardent devotees of Lord *Vishnu*). *Panchārati* - the waving of the five-flamed *hārati*, signals the completion of the rituals of that session. *Basodhara* (a special long-handled ladle) is used to offer the final ghee offering unto the fire.

After the *Yajna*, the *kalašas* are lifted up (*uttāpanam*) and ceremoniously brought in for the *mahā abhishekam* of *Śri Sudaršana*, with *theertha* (sacred waters of the *kalašas*), and with formal hospitalities (*upacāra*) at regular intervals. The final anointing is from the divinely charged waters of the central *kalaša*. After the *abhishekam*, the decorated *Śri Sudaršana* is majestically taken on a *prākāra utsavam* (celebration on a palanquin) as a fitting finale. *Mahā Mangala Hārati* is the final *hārati*, which concludes this three-day celebration.

***Jaya Jaya Śri Sudaršana! Jaya Jaya Śri Sudaršana!***  
(Victory to *Śri Sudaršana*! Victory to *Śri Sudaršana*!)



***Śri Sudaršana Mahā Yajnam***  
***Friday, July 14<sup>th</sup> thru Sunday, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017***



## ***Significance of the Rituals***



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## ŠRI SUDARŠANA

Lord *Vishnu* carries with Him *panchāyudam* (five weapons), namely, *Šri Sudaršana*, the disc, *Pāñchajanya*, the conch shell, *Koumodaka*, the mace, *Nandaki*, the sword, and *Šāraṅga*, the bow. The *Sudaršana chakra* has received Lord *Vishnu*'s total power and His *sankalpa śakthi* (the ability to fulfill His intentions). In this respect the *chakra* is not just an ordinary *śastra* (a weapon without a mental capacity), but an *astra* (a weapon with mental capability – the ability to obey orders and do what the holder intends).

*Šri Sudaršana* has an *ugra* (fierce) disposition, and is shown as having eight to sixteen hands, carrying a weapon in each. *Šri Yoga Nrisimha* (the fourth *avatār* of Lord *Vishnu*) also has a fierce disposition. This sentiment is illustrated by images showing *Šri Sudaršana* on the front with Lord *Nrisimha* on the flip side.

However, the fierceness comes across only to those who cause harm to Lord *Vishnu*'s devotees; while *Šri Sudaršana*'s devotees feel His benevolent grace. In the *purānas*, Lord *Vishnu* had come to the rescue of the elephant devotee *Gajendra* by sending the *Sudaršana Chakra* to destroy the crocodile that was threatening *Gajendra*'s life. Lord *Vishnu* had also sent *Šri Sudaršana* to chase after sage *Durvāsa* who was causing harm to His devotee, king *Ambarisha*.

*Šri Sudaršana* is recognized as a *pratyaksha* (instantly rewarding) *devata*, rewarding those who worship Him sincerely, by fulfilling their wishes. The most important effect of *Šri Sudaršana* worship is *pida vimochanam* - getting immediate relief from pain and suffering to the seeker (by shifting our burdens from our shoulders to His).

The second most important effect is *pāpa nāśanam* - getting rid of our sins, thereby releasing us to open our minds to divinity, to ultimately experience oneness with the divinity within. Leading us to *śaranāgati* (total and unconditional surrender) and eventually to *moksha* or liberation.

In order to get our mind ready to focus, we have to maintain mental and physical purity. Chanting the powerful *Sudaršana mantra* is said to remove the ailments affecting our body, mind and intellect; and also the ill effects of the *Navagrahas* (the nine planets whose movements and positions are believed to influence our lives). *Yajna*, where collective prayer is offered, enhances this effect.

*Sudaršana homam* is also performed during *griha pravesam* (house warming), when starting a new business venture, or for the removal of all obstacles, for relief during difficult periods in life and to succeed in all endeavors. This *homam* is also offered on 60<sup>th</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup>, and 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays for longevity. For these reasons *Sudaršana homa* is frequently performed in our homes.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF RITUALS

*Bhakti* (devotion) is essential for both religious and spiritual pursuits. The main aim of rituals is to develop *bhakti* and prepare us to receive the Divine knowledge. They are prescribed in our scriptures, and are important aspects of religious discipline.

In a *Devasthānam* (temple), the abode of the Divine *Devas*, rituals are offered in a timely manner by qualified priests, as prescribed in the *śāstras*. Understanding the rituals and their purpose could enhance our appreciation of them.

A *Yajna* is a *vedic* ritual where the fire god, *Agni*, as a messenger, carries the sacrificial oblations to the intended Deity. *Agni* is described as the witness of all deeds; and also the destroyer of our sins and negativities. *Mahā Yajnas* are performed in Temples for *loka kshema* - the welfare of all beings in the world. *Yajnas* are essential, as they link us with *Devas*, the hidden cosmic forces that exist all around us.

This *yajna* starts out with asking *Anujna* (divine consent and strength). *Viśvaksena Ārādhana* and *Ganapati Homam* are for the removal of all obstacles. *Punyāhavāchanam* is to cleanse the area, the holy items used and also the devotees gathered. An *abhishekam*, a holy shower with several prescribed ingredients, is performed for *Šri Sudaršana*. *Vāstu śānti* is the making of an offering to the resident benevolent spirits, for balance, peace and prosperity. *Ankurārpanam* (offering of sprouts) is where the freshly collected soil during *Mritsangrahanam* is placed in nine small pots, where grains soaked overnight are placed and watered.

The collection of these pots, known as *pālika* is watered every morning and evening during the *yajna*. Their lush growth symbolically correlates with the prosperity of the *yajna* and the blessings received. *Rakshā Bandhanam*, a protective binder, is the tying of a turmeric paste smeared thread around the wrist of the main participants.