



Vijaya Dasami (Tenth Day of Victory) and Vidyaarambham / Aksharabyasam (Initiation into the Alphabet)

Friday, October 15 2021 at 6:45 PM & 7:30 PM.

The Meaning and Significance of Vidyaarambham

October 15th is Vijaya Dasami day, the Tenth Day (Dasami) of Victory (Vijaya) of the forces of light and bliss against the forces of darkness and ignorance. Vijaya Dasami is the tenth day after the nine-day Navaratri or Dassera Ceremony which celebrates the victory of the ten-handed Goddess Durga over the demon Mahisasura. Rama also achieved victory over Ravana on this day in the Treta Yuga. During the Dvaapara Yuga, the Pandavas retrieved their weapons on this day from the Shami tree, where they had hidden it before their thirteenth year of exile in disguise.

Vijaya Dasami is a most auspicious day for Akshara Abhyaasam -- initiating children 2-3 years old into the akshara (alphabet) of their mother tongue. This samskara (sacred ritual or sacrament) is also called Vidya Arambham, which means arambha (beginning) of Vidya (knowledge), since we begin to acquire knowledge by first learning the letters of a language. Children are seated on the lap of their parent, who holds and writes with the child's index finger "*Om Hari Sree Ganapataye Namaha*" on the rice grains on a plate. The same mantra is also symbolically written on the tongue of the child (in the old days this was done with a gold implement!) to invoke the blessings of Goddess Sarasvati, the reservoir of all knowledge, arts, and sciences.

During the Vidyaarambham/Aksharabhyaasam ceremony at Sri Lakshmi Temple, the priests and volunteers will guide parents through the whole process. All necessary materials will also be provided.

It is also important for parents to remember that they should continue their children's learning of their mother tongue after this traditional start. It is through our mother-tongue that our connection with our culture and religion is maintained. So we appeal to parents to make sure that they speak and teach their mother tongue at home to their children after aksharabhyaasam. Research studies show that not only do young children learn multiple languages quickly, *their overall brain development is also enhanced if they are fluent in two or more languages.*

Vidya Arambham / Akshara Abhyasam
Initiating Children into the Alphabet
Sponsorship \$51 (with all materials provided)

May the blessings of Sri Lakshmi and Sri Saraswathi be always with you and your family!