

**STAYING AT SRI SAKTHI AMMA'S  
PEEDAM  
SRI KAMALA NIVAS & NEW  
GUESTHOUSE**



**Information to help you to settle in**

**~ OM NAMO NARAYANI ~**

## **YOUR ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE**

Welcome to Peedam and the spiritual oasis of Sripuram. This booklet will provide you with key information to help you settle in.

### **CHECKING IN**

Please ensure that you complete in full the 2 paper forms when you check-in to your room. Foreign guests are required to register passport and visa details upon arrival and a photocopy of the guest's current Indian Visa will be taken. Additionally a new online registration is required by the government. You will be stepped through this by the reception staff sometime during your stay. Accounts for accommodation at the guesthouse and transport should be paid for in Indian Rupees or by credit card.

### **SHOES**

Please do not wear shoes inside the guesthouse or temples. They are left outside the front entrance. Bring flip-flops, sandals, or some other comfortable, inexpensive shoes for walking around outside. It is best to avoid leather.

### **ROOM ALLOCATION**

You will have been allocated suitable rooms at the time of booking. If you have any queries regarding your room, please ask at Reception to speak to the Manager, Yuvaraj. Unmarried couples will be allocated separate rooms in line with the local culture. We ask that you respect this even if it is not in keeping with your customs at home. (If you have been living in a de-facto relationship then you can stay together.)

### **ROOM KEYS**

It is best to leave your room key at the reception. Please take care of your possessions and valuables by locking your room securely when you leave, as the Guest House is not responsible for any lost items.

### **LEAVING PEEDAM PREMISES**

If you are an overseas guest, please notify reception staff before you leave Peedam premises to go into Vellore for any reason (e.g. shopping, bank etc).

### **ORIENTATION AND TOURS**

There is a short video designed to help new guests gain a better understanding of Sri Sakthi Amma, Sri Narayani Peedam and associated projects and programs. Guests will also be given the opportunity to take a tour of a number of the nearby projects within 2 to 3 days of arrival at Peedam. Please look at the noticeboard for orientation/tour times, or contact the Hospitality Manager, Yuvaraj, for more information.

### **DEPARTURES FROM THE GUEST HOUSE**

Hospitality Manager, Yuvaraj, can arrange a vehicle to take you to Chennai (or other locations) when you are leaving Sri Kamala Nivas. If you are flying out of Chennai airport we recommend you leave approximately 6 hours before your flight departure time (this allows for 3 hours travel time and 3 hours at the airport for check-in).

## **GUEST HOUSE FACILITIES & INFORMATION**

### **RECEPTION (located in Kamala Nivas)**

The reception is open 24 hours a day and staff can help guests with:

- Providing internet coupons

- International phone calls
- Puja timings and sponsoring
- Providing toilet paper
- Providing blankets

Guests are asked to inform reception staff if they are traveling to Vellore. If you need any further information or assistance please ask at Reception or speak to Hospitality Manager, Yuvaraj.

## **AIR-CONDITIONING**

In an effort to reduce costs and to be kind to the environment, we encourage guests to use their AC minimally. A good alternative is to open your windows (keep screens locked to avoid visits from monkeys) and turn your fan on – this will also help you adjust to the outside temperatures and is better for your health than moving often between cold and hot temperatures. Guests are requested to switch off the air-conditioning, geyser (hot water system) and dressing room light (large rooms only) whenever they are not required and always upon leaving the room. The switch to the geyser hot water system is the big switch located near the front door.

## **FOOD**

Peedam is strictly ‘Pure Vegetarian’. This means that all meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and animal-based products such as rennet and gelatin are not to be brought into Peedam or guesthouse in any circumstance. Dairy products are considered ‘pure’ foods, and are therefore widely consumed. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served buffet style in the Kamala Nivas Dining Hall.

Complimentary breakfast is served in the New Guest Houses (Blocks A-D). Much chili and spice is used in the South Indian food served at Peedam however ‘less spicy’ options are available on a separate table in the dining room. If you have special dietary requirements feel free to discuss this with the Hospitality Manager, Yuvaraj. The Ashram will do its best to accommodate your needs.

It is best if you can bring own GF breakfast cereal & goodies as they do not understand what gluten free means. The supermarket in Vellore ‘Harish’ has many western-style food options.

Guests are reminded to observe the vegetarian guidelines when purchasing any food to be consumed at the guesthouses – please check food labels carefully. Food is not to be kept or consumed in guest rooms – there is a fridge and cooking area in the dining room if required. Outside of the Guesthouse, there are a variety of local vendors and restaurants. Approximate prices for fresh fruit, such as coconuts cost 15 Rupees, Papaya 40-50 rps, Banana 60rps for a dozen.

## **MEAL TIMES AND ETIQUETTE**

Kamala Nivas Guest House

- Breakfast: 8 am – 10 am
- Lunch: 1 pm – 3 pm
- Dinner: 7 pm – 9 pm

These times are subject to daily change on account of the spiritual program at Sri Pooram. There are two main food sections: spicy Indian Food in the front area, and non-spicy Western food in the back area. Water, tea and coffee are always available from the machines in the Kamala Nivas dining hall. During meal times, please be mindful to respect others silence, to clear your dishes in the bins, and to leave the area as tidy as possible. The Dining Hall will be closed outside of these times for cleaning purposes. There is a hot/cold water dispenser located just outside the hall which can be accessed any time.

Amma suggests that during your stay, to eat at least once at the Sripuram dining hall, Anna Dhanam to get a firsthand experience of Sakthi Amma’s food program. Every meal served is

South Indian style: on a banana leaf and eating with your right hand. No cutlery is available. Use your ring to index fingers together as a scoop and then use your thumb to push the food into your mouth, enjoy the cultural experience! The Anna Dhanam dining hall is located next to the Kamala Nivas guesthouse entrance to Sripuram. You will need to contact Reception to open the gate for the guest entrance to Sripuram. From there, please ask the security guard for guidance to Anna Dhanam. Anna Dhanam Meal Times Lunch : 12pm – 3.00pm

## **EATING**

If eating with your hands, always remember to only use your right hand when bringing food to your mouth. Wash hands before and after eating.

## **WATER AND DRINKS**

Safe, purified water is freely available in the Kamala Nivas dining room from the stainless steel water dispenser or plastic water dispenser; and in the common lobby on every floor in New Guest House. **TAP WATER SHOULD NOT BE DRUNK.** While you can refill your own water bottles at the guesthouse, bottled water and drinks can also be purchased from shops and are safe as long as the seals are intact. Drinking green coconut juice (bought on the street) should be fine as long as it is opened in front of you. Please ensure that you consume an adequate intake of fluid each day as it is easy to become dehydrated (even in winter) without being aware due to heat. We suggest you drink 2-4 litres of water each day.

## **ROOM CLEANING**

Keeping your room clean during your stay is your responsibility. If you need cleaning supplies please ask the cleaning staff or the Hospitality Manager, Yuvaraj.

## **TIPS**

Please do not tip the staff at the Guest Houses or Temples. However it is customary to give dakshina (a tip) to priests when they perform a puja for you. Amma's employees receive a good income for local cost of living, compared to many less well off people in the community. If you wish to help the people here, you can donate to Peedam which runs many charity projects that help the community.

## **MONKEYS**

Monkeys can be naughty around the guesthouse. **DO NOT FEED THE MONKEYS** as this contributes to their attitude. Keep all doors and windows (and screens) firmly shut when you leave your room and do not leave fruit/food out. Place all food waste inside the dining hall rubbish bins only. **DO NOT** under any circumstance approach a monkey as they can be aggressive.

## **LAUNDRY**

The laundry ("Dhobi") man picks up and drops off laundry every morning at the guesthouses. Rates are approximately:

- Small items (i.e. sari blouse) - RS. 5
- Medium item (i.e. shirt, pants) - RS. 10
- Large item (i.e. sari) - RS. 50
- For Sari dry-cleaning - RS 100

Leave items to be washed outside your room the night before as they will be collected early the next morning (around 7am). Payment on delivery. Please keep an inventory of your laundry and make a count upon payment. Most times your laundry will be returned to you within two days. During the rainy season, laundry takes more time as the dryer for the clothes is natural : the sun.

## **CAMERAS & CELL PHONES**

Cameras and cell phones are prohibited in Sripuram and Peedam – it is best to leave these locked in your room at the guesthouse. Taking photos at Sripuram and Peedam is not allowed.

## **INTERNET ACCESS**

Internet access is available at Sri Kamala Nivas only ( not available at the new guest house blocks). Please enquire at the front desk for assistance in using either the computers in the internet room (behind reception) or the wi-fi network on your own computer. Coupons for internet access can be purchased for:

- 1 hour - RS. 30 (to be used in one session)
- 1 week - RS. 500 (unlimited)
- 1 month - RS. 1000 (unlimited)

You will get the best connection in the computer room, in the reception area or on your balcony.

## **TELEPHONE**

An international telephone booth is located at Sri Kamala Nivas reception. Please ask reception staff for help if needed. Dial 00 + international code.

## **LIBRARY**

A small library is located in the computer room at Sri Kamala Nivas. Guests are welcome to read these books in their rooms during their stay and then return them before departure. Donations of books are much appreciated.

## **SMOKING AND ALCOHOL**

Drinking alcohol, ingestion of drugs and smoking is strictly prohibited in all Peedam premises including the guesthouse. Your comfort is our priority. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

## **OUTSIDE FACILITIES**

### **AUTO RICKSHAWS**

For traveling into town, Vellore, the easiest option is to hire an auto rickshaw, many of which will be found outside the entrance to the hospital. You can pay for a return trip and pay for the driver's waiting

time while you shop or take a one-way trip and flag down another auto when you are ready to return. Always agree on the price before you get in the auto as the meter is never used. Please enquire at Reception for current prices. Tipping depends on the hospitality of the driver.

### **BANKING FACILITIES / ATM**

There is a 24 hour ATM located at Canara Bank next to Kamala Nivas guesthouse which accepts international cards, and 2 more ATMs to the left of the Sripuram Public Entrance. You can withdraw up to Rs10000 per transaction. If you wish to change foreign currency into rupees, please enquire at Reception.

## **LOCAL CUSTOMS + ETIQUETTE**

### **DRESS CODE**

As per Hindu custom, devotees should take their shower/bath first thing each morning before

changing into their fresh set of clothes for the day –this is especially important before entering the temples or attending any pujas. All guests are requested to wear traditional. Indian dress at all times while staying at the guesthouse, around Peedam and Sripuram.

**Men:** Kurta suit (any colour except black), dhoti with white shirt, or white slacks with a white shirt. While there are some instances where men may be asked to remove their shirt at the temple, it is NOT acceptable for men to walk around Peedam or guesthouse shirtless. Pants must be full-length – no shorts or Bermudas. Cotton dhotis, srivastram and white shirts can be purchased at the Sripuram Gift Store (in Sripuram). Ready-made kurta suits are also available in Vellore.

**Women:** Please wear saris or salwar kameez/Punjabi suits (pants, tunic & shawl). Women should dress modestly at all times – this means no sleeveless or short tops, low cut necklines, tight-fitting pants, shorts or see-through clothing.

- Generally saris are worn for any formal occasions such as weddings or special functions. If wearing a sari, you will also need a matching blouse, underskirt and lots of safety pins. Don't hesitate to ask a local woman for help if you are having difficulty tying a sari.
- Women wearing salwar kameez / punjabi suits should remember to always wear the dupatta (matching scarf) when in public and especially in the temple.
- Guests can wear any colour dress, however bright colours - not black are considered the most auspicious to wear at a temple. It is considered inauspicious to wear black or white to a wedding in India.
- If you want to purchase saris or tunics, they are available from the Sripuram Gift Store.
- In Hindu culture, the cow is considered holy, so please refrain from bringing leather items (belts, shoes, wallets etc.) to Peedam.
- It is custom for women to tie their hair away from the face in a ponytail or braids.

## **BEGGING**

Please do not encourage the practice of begging. It is good to be generous with others but this should be done responsibly. Amma has many assistance programs operating for the welfare of those in need including daily Anna Dhanam (free distribution of food to the needy).

## **ETIQUETTE / SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

In general, Peedam and the surrounding village are very conservative. Men and women should not hold hands or embrace in public as this may cause offence.

## **PUJA & TEMPLES**

### **PUJA INFORMATION**

Amma's prayers during pujas is for all of humanity and living beings. In a puja, wholehearted participation creates energy that brings a person mania amaidhi (inner peace). The puja energy even seeps into the soil, and so all those who walk on the land are blessed. During puja, Amma's blessings come to people in three ways: sparisam (when Amma touches someone); nayanam (when Amma's glance falls on someone); and manasam (when Amma thinks about someone).

### **Abishekam**

Witnessing the daily puja on the idol of Goddess Narayani (known as "Mangala Narayani") is considered a rare blessing. In this ritual, which can take Sri Sakthi Amma more than four hours to complete, the idol is bathed in holy water, rice, milk, flowers, fruits and other items as a way of showing devotion to the goddess Narayani, also known as the Divine Mother or Mother Earth. Amma performs the puja for humankind, the Earth, the Universe and every sentient being. The ritual must include the five elements of nature: earth, water, fire, air and aether. After the bathing,

the idol is clothed and an aarti (lamp ritual) is performed as a way of showing further devotion and love for the Divine Mother. Devotees present at the ritual should express gratitude to nature and the five elements, which form the very basis on which all life forms are supported. This puja is usually performed by Amma in the Shanti Mandapam at Sri Narayani Peedam. This is located across the road from the entrance to the golden temple. When completed, hundreds of devotees line up to receive Amma's darshan (blessing) and theertum (holy water). Gho puja This daily puja performed on the cow, considered the "Universal Mother" in Vedic tradition, is one of the highest forms of worship. The cow's service to humanity is highly respected because the cow gives milk unconditionally, not only to her young, but to humans each day. She also helps feeds the celestial world as her milk is transformed to ghee and offered by priests or devotees in lamps or in fire pujas. The cow represents shathwig - all the peaceful and positive characteristics of living beings. Sri Sakthi Amma or the other priests feed the cow and showers her with flowers, rice, holy water and other items, which generates positive energy that can remove evil and help to achieve a happy and contented life for all living beings.

### **Ganesh puja**

Lord Ganesha is known as the supreme remover of obstacles and the master of circumstances. This is why most Vedic rituals and auspicious acts are never undertaken without invoking Ganesha first. It is believed that by performing puja on Ganesha, disturbances Ganesha's elephant head makes him easy to identify.

### **Full Moon Puja**

Performed every month on the night of full moon, this is a yagam (fire puja) conducted on a grand scale to utilize the immense energy generated when the moon is at its fullest. In this ritual, many types of herbs, sweets, fruits and special dishes are offered to the Divine through the holy fire. With the help of a select group of priests, Sri Sakthi Amma chants Vedic mantras, which help to magnify the energy generated from the moon and sun. Amma says that the full moon yagam is performed for the welfare of humanity and all other living things.

### **Tulasi Puja**

Tulasi or tulsi is a holy basil plant cultivated for spiritual and medicinal purposes. Sri Sakthi Amma performs tulasi puja by offering water to the plant, decorating the earthen pot. An arti (lamp ritual) is performed to complete the puja, which is done to display devotion and gratitude to nature.

### **Elephant and Horse Puja**

The elephant and horse are two animals which symbolize different devas or angels. While performing puja on these animals, which act as a medium to connect with the devas, Sri Sakthi Amma is pleasing the angels by displaying devotion and love to them.

### **Surya Puja**

Surya means sun. Sri Sakthi Amma performs a daily puja to the life source of the sun.

### **Arti**

An arti or aarti is a ritual of worship in which light from wicks soaked in ghee or camphor is performed on various forms of the Divine. In doing so, the plate or lamp used in the ritual acquires the power of the deity. The positive energy is magnified and spread not only to those present, but to all living beings.

## **PUJA SCHEDULE**

Amma performs pujas daily. The main puja is Abishekam (bathing/purification puja) which takes place at Shanti Mandapam usually starting sometime between 12.30pm – 2.30pm. It has three parts:

- Part 1. Sri Sakthi Amma performs the daily abishekem (bathing) of Mangala Narayani in Shanti Mandapam lasting from one to two hours.
- Part 2. The curtain is closed while Amma dresses/ adorns Mangala Narayani with flowers etc. This is called Alakaram. Bhajans are also sung. This takes approximately one hour. You can stay or return to Sri Kamala Nivas for lunch during this time.
- Part 3. Aarhi or the offering of lamps to Mangala Narayani (approximately one hour). This may be followed by Amma giving theertham (blessed water from the bathing of Narayani) to the devotees. Occasionally, Amma may also do Gho Puja (cow puja) and Aarhi Puja at night.

In addition to Amma's pujas, the priests also conduct puja daily at Peedam and Sripuram. The times listed below may vary depending on the month. **Peedam**

- 5:30am :Abishekam in Big Narayani Temple
- 7:30am : Gho Puja
- 8:00am : Aarhi in Big Narayani Temple
- 5:30pm : Gho Puja
- 7:00pm: Aarhi in Big Narayani Temple Sripuram
- 4:15am :Abishekam at The Golden Temple (must sponsor)
- 9:00am : Sri Suktam Homam (must sponsor)
- 6:00pm : Sri Suktam Homam (must sponsor)

Each day's schedule of pujas can be checked at reception as start times may vary. Sri Kamala Nivas staff will usually notify guests (by ringing your doorbell) when Amma's puja has commenced. Some of these pujas may not be open to the general public and temple staff will advise you of this at the time.

## **SPONSORING PUJAS**

It is possible to sponsor a puja at Sri Narayani Peedam or Sripuram and the front office staff can arrange this for you.

## **TEMPLE ETIQUETTE**

When you go up for theertham (holy water) to meet Amma, the protocol is:

- Please do not touch Sri Sakthi Amma
- As per Hindu custom, it is a form of respect to lower your head to Amma

Please observe the following customs whilst you are at Peedam:

- Please refrain from physical contact (e.g. embracing, shaking hands) at Peedam temples and Sripuram. It is customary to raise your hand at chest level (Namaste) and greet others with "Om Namo Narayani".
- It is considered disrespectful to point the soles of one's feet towards Amma, a sacred picture or object or a person. When sitting during puja, please cross or fold legs underneath you. As there is a lot of sitting on hard floor during puja devotees may wish to bring a small cushion or mat to sit on.
- Unless the hair is very short, hair should always be tied up or pulled back off the face when going to the temple.
- When giving or receiving anything in India, always use your right hand. Any offering being given to Amma should also be placed in an offering basket –these can be provided on request from temple staff.

## **SEVA (Volunteering / Service)**

Opportunities for service are easy to find. Please speak to Hospitality Manager, Yuvaraj. At Kamala Nivas you can...

- help prepare food any time of day
- serve food during meal times
- clean the dining room during and after meal times
- Maintaining and water the gardens
- At Sripuram Anna Dhanam (dining hall) you can...
- help with vegetable preparation (7-11am)
- serve water during meal times (12-3pm)
- serve food all day (8am-12pm & 3-8pm)

At Sri Narayani Peedam you can...

- help with temple cleaning ((6-8.30am)

Other Seva opportunities... Once you have visited the Sri Narayani Seva projects you may find that you can offer assistance in one of these areas:

- SAMM Women's project
- ☑ Green Sakthi projects
- ☑ Sri Narayani Vidyalaya School (from nursery to grade 12)
- ☑ Sri Narayani Hospital & Research Centre
- ☑ Sri Narayani Nursery (2-4 year olds) behind the Peedam
- ☑ Feeding ghos (cows) at the ghosalla (you will need to sponsor the food)
- ☑ Also sponsorship of any puja is considered service

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

If you become ill, please notify the Hospitality Manager, Yuvaraj, so we can assist you if necessary. Mild dehydration, gastrointestinal upset and fever are relatively common conditions experienced by travelers to India. In most cases simple remedies (e.g. oral rehydration salts, a bland diet, paracetamol are all available from the pharmacy) and rest will suffice, but it is advisable to seek advice from a doctor at the Sri Narayani Hospital or with the Ayurvedic doctor at Sri Sakthi Amma's Holistic Centre. The risk of infection to cuts or burns in this area is high due to the climate so it is important to take good care of these minor injuries and to seek medical attention if necessary. The Sri Narayani Hospital & Research Centre is state-of-the-art. There is a pharmacy which supplies both hospital prescription and over the counter medication. Both are accessible to guests 24 hours a day. Should you wish to be treated at the hospital, contact reception at Kamala Nevas and they will let the hospital staff know you are coming which may save you time.

### **Taking care of yourself**

Rest is another important part of integrating your experience, so please listen to your body and rest if you need to. Amma's grace extends to people in their sleep and you might find you have usual dreams, or expansive meditative sleeps that are not like usual sleep whilst you are in Peedam. Honour the process and understand the rest and sleep helps us integrate the vast energy we are receiving. Additionally, it is good to know that you can come and go from the pujas as you please and there is no expectation that you need to stay from the beginning at leave at the end. You will see many people quietly coming for darshan (viewing that gives the blessing) of Narayani mangala and Sri Shakti Amma and leaving to go back to their work or just arriving at the end of puja to receive the tirthum from Amma. All of this is totally OK.

## **Roof top Exercise**

A great place to get the body moving is the rooftop of Kamal Nivas. Especially beautiful on dusk. You can pace about there or practice yoga if there is no one around. Just remember that if you are running or jumping that you are actually on someone's roof so this cannot be done in sleeping hours.

## **Grounding in the garden**

You can get up a sweat with some tree planting or gardening at Kamala Nivas or at the schools with the green sakthi group. Talk to Nathalie about exactly what is needed. Being in nature and working with the trees and soil is particular rewarding and grounding seva.

## **Feeding the cows at Ghosala**

You can sponsor the seva of feeding the cows in the ghosalla. It is actually quite a workout to walk around and carry the branches that they eat. As well its great karma to feed the angels!

## **Hiking**

Hiking in the nearby hills is sometimes an option but is currently closed by the forestry department due to social issues- our safety can not be guaranteed. Please check the status of the hike during your stay, see below for details. In the nearby hills there is also a hike available that takes you up the hill where a small puja area dedicated to Hanuman can be found. The trek must be organized through Kamala Nivas reception or Yuvaraj (and requires Amma's permission). It is arranged with guides and is tricky terrain not suitable for everyone. You leave early in the morning to avoid the heat. It takes about 2.5 hours on the way up and 1.5 hours on the way down. If you go make sure to wear appropriate foot wear, sun cream, take food and plenty of water!

## **Shopping**

As the guidelines suggest, shopping is not the focus of our time at Sri Sakthi Amma's ashram. However, some people have enjoyed using shopping as a time out from the intensity of the spiritual feast available in Peedam and on retreat. There is great puja shopping within Peedam star path shops. You can also buy saris and a small selection of other Ashram appropriate clothing. These pujabis are produced in a project whereby women who have lost their husbands or who's husbands are in jail. These women are given the opportunity to work and make a living. As mentioned previously, you can also go to Vellore for a more extensive range of sarai shopping and there is also a supermarket there. Please note that if you are going off campus into town, it is required that you let the staff know for safety.

## **Ladies holiday**

Ladies holiday can be reduced from 3 days to 2 days if the period is very light or you are on a short stay. From an energetic perspective, another reason for having women take a rest during the period of menstruation is because the sex chakra can become quite filled with energy at this time. If the spiritual energy then coalesces within the already engaged chakra it can create period pain. (Sweeping can assist this). This is seen as a time for the women to be able to honour herself and take rest from the many duties she would normally have cooking, raising the children and even labouring in traditional India. Honour your ladies holiday as a time for rest and contemplation. Please note that you can also do seva, but not inside any of the temple complexes (including Ghosalla and Annapurna hall in the Star Path). Attending the school programs, watering the tress or gardening in Kamala Nivas are great seva options for this time. You may also like to tune into the pujas from your room and this can still be a powerful and rewarding experience.

## **Have you had your lunch?**

This is a question you will hear a lot at the Ashram. “Have you had your breakfast, have you had your lunch, have you had your dinner?” Firstly, we can contextualise this question, as conversational relating. Southern Indians use this a bit like, “how you going” or “It’s hot today” But additionally, we are in the home of the Divine Mother and self nurturing and being fed by the Mother are a part of the experience. Amma says it is harder to concentrate on our spirituality if our basic needs aren’t met. So Amma feeds us spiritually as well as feeding the hungry, such as in Sri Puram where 6000-20,000 people are fed daily. It is important to make sure you are taking food whilst on retreat! Sometimes we can become ungrounded and full of shakti and forget to eat or not be interested in eating. We need balance here. Sometimes when we first arrive at Peedam trying to eat lots of food can be too much for the system, which is trying to digest the extra shakti. So you may wish to take less food. However, as you adjust, it is important to make sure you are eating well and well hydrated. It is so easy to become dehydrated in this climate and with the amount of shakti at Peedam. It’s great to always carry a water bottle with you. Lunch is the main meal of the day. If staying in Kamala Nivas, the less spicy food can be found in the kitchen, out the back of the dining hall, whereas traditional southern Indian food is served in the main hall.

### **Meal times are**

- Breakfast 8-10am
- Lunch 1-3pm
- Supper 7-9pm

Keep tuning into your needs and remember to take food and water when you need it. Divine café, next to Kamala Nivas also has a vast menu and includes some delicious juices and mixed fruit milks that can be great for the inner child.

## **Protein**

We probably have more protein in our diets than is offered in the ashram. You can bring nuts to sprinkle on your food or to snack on or protein powders which helps to keep the usual protein going. Or, drink more milk, have more dhal.

## **FAQ’s**

### **Why do we have to give and receiving with the right hand?**

Traditionally in India it is considered rude to give or receive or put food to the mouth using the left hand. This is because traditionally the left hand was used for the toileting (and there was not toilet paper). This custom is still a part of the culture in southern India, so please use your right hand to give, receive and put food to your mouth. You may also notice locals drinking from a cup by pouring the water and not touching the mouth. Similarly, this tradition was initiated to protect people hygienically before the advent of other sanitation methods. Culturally it still remains. If you are in a setting where a single cup is being shared, then it is customary to pour the contents without touching your mouth (using your right hand). It is an experiment in coordination- have fun!

### **Why do we wear Kum Kum?**

The tradition of wearing kum kum is to protect the Ajna chakra from the entry of negative energies. We also associate kum kum (red) with Divine Mother compassion, thus compassionate consciousness. Amma asks us to always wear kum kum in the temple.

### **Why are we asked not to point the feet?**

In addition to the fact that we are walking on the ground with our feet, (so they can sometimes

become dirty) we have chakras in the soles of our feet and we are often releasing energies from these chakras. So when we point our feet this directs the releasing energy at the person. This is particularly pertinent in a temple setting. Therefore it is best to sit cross-legged, or on your legs with feet behind you or cover your feet with a shawl if you are sitting in another way.

## **Bowing**

Bowing is not compulsory. The esoteric truth, of the energy releasing through the feet chakras, is also why it is a blessing to touch the feet or bow at the feet of a Guru. Because the energy that flows from the Master is very high vibrational and will lift us up. When we bow our ajna and crown chakra are filled with the blessing flowing from the feet. Bowing is certainly not compulsory. Please do not touch Amma's feet (or any part of Amma) without Her permission. In Peedam, women are not meant to bow full prostrate (lying flat out on the floor) because the breasts are not meant to touch the ground as a sign of respect for the woman. Women can bow by kneeling with knees/lower leg on the ground then lowering the head. (like sleeping child pose in yoga)

## **What is going on in Puja?**

Puja is about Devotion. Puja means prayer and can be in many forms such as, can be in the form of abhishekam (ritual bathing of the Deity), fire puja (homam, yagam), flower puja (offering flowers to the Deity) and so on. Devotion is useful to give a focus for the mind so we can connect with the Divine, because really the Divine is formless and in all forms. The rituals and pujas are done to engage us with the Divine. The significance of externalizing our devotion to an external object of Devotion, such as a murti (enlivened statue) or even to the Guru, is a useful practice in helping our egos to surrender and learn love, rather than our ego thinking "I am the Divine, I am That" (giving a boost to the ego!). Puja helps us to grow our love and then the Divine qualities emerge. Through this path of Bhakti (devotion) the ego becomes a chariot for the soul and Divine qualities to express, so that when we realize the Divine is within, it is not the ego thinking that it is the doer and the whole Self! Amma says: "All the religions point to the one truth that the Divine is everywhere. So how can we say the Divine exists in one particular form? When we say the Divine exists everywhere, it also means the Divine exists in the idol. Because through it you are saying the Divine is everywhere. Everywhere means even in the idol. So the ultimate purpose of idol worship is to engage ourselves. It helps to focus; it helps us to have concentration, which will elevate us to the second level, which will eventually elevate us to the ultimate level. At that level you don't need anything. So the truth behind all of this is very simple, but it is very powerful. It will bring the real transformation". (Connect with the Divine Vol 2, pg 188)

Please read Amma's collections of discourse in the books Divine Connection and Divine Connection 2 available at Sri Puram for further information about the nature of the Bhakti path and how the Pujas work among other gems! Asking questions and letting go! All of the materials, chants and ritual have an esoteric meaning. If you have special questions feel free to ask them and if we don't know, we can see if we can find out the answer. It is a delight to understand more deeply about the significance of the ritual. However, if we get attached to needing to know every detail we can become frustrated and miss out of the purpose of the practice. Ultimately, the purpose of the ritual is to connect us with the Divine and the mind doesn't have to know the meaning of everything for it to work. Much of the transformation that occurs in Sri Sakthi Amma Peedam is beyond the mind and through the heart. The practices are based on the Vedas (ancient Indian texts). The Vedas are referred to as "sruti", which means what is heard, and were directly revealed, distinguishing them from other texts, which are called "smirti" (what is remembered). So, the Vedic practices, which were derived from Nature through the great sages of the past, are actually from the Divine. They use methods which all have esoteric meaning, but the meanings are not necessary for us to know for the practices to work. Just like we can listen to beautiful music on our ipod without knowing how the ipod actually is put together and running. Similarly, when we immerse our self with devotion and an open mind into the practices and energy of Peedam we can have our soul sing, without the mind really knowing how this miracle of love and grace had taken place.

## **Om Namo Narayani**

“There is a way to peace: surrender. When you surrender to the Divine you will become that. You will know the meaning of peace. When you surrender to the Divine you will become a part of the Divine. You get wisdom and peace automatically. .... It is also hard to get peace by trying to understand everything. ....it is not possible to understand everything by asking questions. The ultimate way is surrender. When you surrender you will become That. You will be that. The best way for peace in your life forever is to surrender and be part of everything.” - Amma

## **AMMA’S MIRACLES**

Miracles occur through faith; they are caused by divine love. Devotees treasure each encounter with Amma. Often times, they regard their specific experiences during these meetings as miraculous. The following testimonials are samples of what have affectionately become known as “Amma stories.”

### **Ron and Barb Greene**

Canada

Ron first met Amma in Canada in 1999. At this meeting, Amma manifested a ‘rudraksham’ – a small bead for Ron and requested him to stay for the evening pooja. A ‘rudraksham’ (“rudra”) is said to come from the tree of knowledge. The next afternoon Amma asked Ron how he enjoyed the pooja, and Ron replied that it was interesting, but it was unclear to him as to what was happening during the ceremony. Amma explained that various aspects of Narayani were called to come and receive blessings. Amma continued to say that when their sound was voiced, they would come. To demonstrate, Amma pointed to the three Goddess statues nearby — Lakshmi, Saraswathi, and Durga. Goddess Saraswathi was singled out and her characteristics were described. The sound for Saraswathi is ‘eimm’ and, when pronounced correctly, Saraswathi will come. Amma then invited Ron to call Saraswathi by saying ‘eimm’, but Ron’s pronunciation must have been incorrect. After his repeated attempts to call Saraswathi Amma then called Saraswathi. Amma instructed Ron to hold out his hand. Amma then manifested a miniature icon of Saraswathi and placed Saraswathi into Ron’s palm. Amma pointed to this Saraswathi and described the same characteristics that had been previously mentioned for the other Saraswathi statue in the room. Amma then told Ron, “When Amma calls them, they will come!” Ron’s next miracle occurred that same afternoon as he was browsing through the store located in the basement of the home. With interest he noticed various items from India. Suddenly he saw some ‘rudraksham’ beads and reached into his pocket to compare the manifested rudra from Amma to these commercial ones. He suddenly started thinking that maybe Amma had not manifested his rudra but had obtained it from this store. As he reached into his pocket to retrieve his bead, he realized that his rudra was gone. Ron panicked! He feared that Amma had read his thoughts and had taken the rudra back, perhaps because of his doubt. He then worried about what Amma might think, knowing that Ron had so carelessly lost such a special gift. Ron searched everywhere in the house for his missing rudra and, when he couldn’t find it by himself, he asked other people to help him in his search. He spent a few hours feeling embarrassed, frustrated, and guilty about his predicament. Just as his frustration peaked, one of Amma’s devotees came out of Amma’s room asking for Ron. The devotee was carrying a small silver plate with a flower on it. He gave it to Ron saying, “Amma sends blessings.” There, in the centre of the plate was Ron’s missing rudra! Ron’s next “Amma story” took place just after his return to Canada from Peedam. He and his friend Bud were having lunch. They were talking about Amma and sharing some of their personal experiences of Peedam. Ron expressed how much he missed Amma and how he wished that he could be with Amma “right now.” At that moment his teacup slid to Bud’s side of the table. Ron asked, “Did you see that?” Bud had barely replied ‘yes’ when the teacup slid back to its original position on Ron’s side of the table. The two men sat speechless for a long time. Ron maintains that this experience was a

reminder of Amma's omnipresence. In October 1999, Barb's mother was very ill. Barb travelled from Calgary to Toronto to seek help and guidance from Amma. Upon hearing about Barb's ailing mother, Amma's eyes closed and when they opened again, 'vibuthi' - sacred ash was manifested. Barb was instructed to administer some of the ash to her mother in a glass of water and apply the remainder to her forehead. By the time Barb returned to Calgary her mother was already better. A friend had told. Barb's mother to discard the medicine she had been taking and took her to see a chiropractor. Barb believes that Amma healed her mother through the intervention of this friend. Barb's mother also took the 'vibuthi' as Amma directed and fully recovered.

### **Krithika – A School Girl's Sister India**

On August 15, 2002, there was much excitement among the school children at Amma's school, the Sri Narayani Vidyalaya. They were celebrating the anniversary of India's Independence Day. There was a parade and a grand celebration as the flag was hoisted at the school. Amma attended the ceremonies and invited a few students to participate in the day's festivities. All the children present received small Indian flags and sweets to take home. Sharanya, a second grader, was among those who left the school bubbling with joy and excitement. Sharanya took the school bus home where her grandma and younger sister, Krithika, were waiting for her at the bus stop. Just as Sharanya got off the bus a motor scooter (trishaw) came up behind the bus too quickly. The driver swerved his scooter to the right of the bus and knocking into Krithika and her grandma. Krithika fell down and her leg went under the bus. As the bus pulled away, Krithika's leg became pinned under the vehicle, dragging her along the road. People screamed, and finally, the bus driver stopped the bus. Krithika was badly injured and was immediately rushed to the nearest hospital, the Christian Medical Centre (CMC). The CMC is a well known medical treatment centre in India and famed for its excellent physicians. The doctors consulted with other professionals from the Apollo Hospital in Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, as well as with doctors from an orthopedic hospital. The initial medical reports indicated that the child's foot was cold and that there were no sensory or motor functions in the foot. There was also a total absence of blood flow in all the vessels below the mid-thigh. In fact, there was no skin tissue at all on parts of her leg. After much consultation, the physicians prepared to amputate the injured leg. Meanwhile, devotees streamed to Amma pleading with Amma to intervene and save the child's leg. They prayed and begged Amma to "take care"! In their hearts they felt that since the child was a girl, living in rural India, her future would be difficult if the doctors amputated her leg. Amma sent a devotee to the hospital everyday with Amma's 'theertham' - holy water for Krithika. The doctors had already decided to amputate, but then the leg unexpectedly showed signs of improvement. The doctors could suddenly feel blood flowing into the foot. Daily meetings took place to discuss Krithika's case because each time the doctors decided to amputate, they noticed some further improvement. They soon discovered that she had sensations in her leg where previously there had been none. Days later, she could wiggle her toes! The doctors could not believe their own eyes! They told Krithika's mother that there was an unseen hand blessing the child and protecting her. They said that it was humanly impossible for her to have all these improvements considering the extent of the damage to the leg. Krithika stayed in the hospital recovering for some time. In the end, the doctors did not amputate her leg; instead, they performed plastic surgery on it. The condition of her leg continues to improve. Her parents are grateful for Amma's blessings, acknowledging that all their daughter's progress and improvements are due to Amma's poojas and blessings. Doctors continue to wonder about this case; the official report states that the recovery was "beyond belief" — a miracle.

~ OM NAMO NARAYANI ~