

Deity Department

Brief History

This department looks after the dresses and flower garlands for the deities at Sri Sri Radha Govind temple. In the beginning, H.G Bhaktika Devi Dasi mataji herself did the flower shopping and garland making for the deities. Now, around 60 people volunteer and during festivals, the number exceeds 60.

Overview of Workflow

- All the services performed are voluntary and no paid employees are hired. Matajis from all walks of life and age groups join hands to stitch dresses and make garlands.
- Matajis relish the sight of the deities decorated and if any faults are noticed, they correct it too.
- It is an interactive way of working and whatever the case maybe, they don't stop the service.
- During festivals like Janmashtami, matajis stay overnight at the temple. Basic vaishnava etiquettes such as cleanliness is maintained by the volunteers, who are either initiated or Ashray devotees.
- Volunteers celebrate each other's birthdays, anniversaries and other festivals to strengthen their bond. They also go on short trips to the Tirumala hills. It is important that nobody feels left out. In this way, there is devotee and devotion care.
- Matajis start by assisting senior devotees in the service and then gradually take part in the mainstream service for the deities.

Unique Features

- The deities are adorned with 2 fresh Tulasi garlands from our gardens everyday.
- Matajis make night dresses and day dresses are purchased from Vrindavan. They cost Rs. 3.5 Lakh a year. Matajis carefully shop for the dress material and sometimes go to Kanjivaram to purchase silk material for the dresses.
- Plan is in place to stitch day dresses too. The volunteers do research, learn painting and dress-work to make better dresses for the Lord and start day outfits.
- Bead-work for making ornaments is also in progress. College students, aged people, etc. come and do seva as per their capacity.

Resources

- A lot of money is saved as the services performed are voluntary in nature. During festivals, the matajis do fund collection activities.
- Sometimes, mataji themselves sponsor the day's dresses for the deities. Many devotees too sponsor for deity dresses and garlands.

Lessons

- In spite of minor misunderstandings, the desire to serve the Lord is the driving force to take things forward. Service attitude is very important apart from chanting and hearing.

- Involvement of leaders is necessary, otherwise volunteers may get stranded and not know what to do next.
- Basic rules and regulations of cleanliness, consciousness and practice must be adhered to. Hence, some regularity to the temple (6m- 1 yr.) must be followed, so that the mood of service for the pleasure of the deities is inculcated within them, otherwise they may think of beautifying themselves on seeing the flowers and ornaments.