

Hindu temple of
florida tampa; sat
april 16th seetha-
rama kalyanam



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" Hindu temple of Florida" Tampa; Sat april 16th " Seetha-Rama Kalyanam"

The service that I attended was at the Hindu Temple of Florida in Tampa Bay.

The service was on Saturday, April 16th, 2011. Not having a Hindu background the service was a great learning experience, and a number of the symbolic elements were lost on me, as I was generally new to the various customs and religious elements. Still, I learned a tremendous amount from the experience. This reflection essay represents my experience attending the service and the attempt to relay this experience through my outsider's lens. There were a number of notable elements of the service that I believed to be worth considering. One of the initial elements that I experienced that differentiated this service from traditional Christian services was that participants were required to remove their shoes before entering. There was a special section where shoes could be stored outside the main temple area. To me this seemed obviously related to a sense of respect and holiness demonstrated within the temple itself that aided in creating a sort of transcendent atmosphere. As I entered the temple, participants were seated on the floor with some playing various drum types instruments and others singing or clapping along to the general music permeating the room. It appeared that some of the individuals in the room had been there for a lengthy period of time. They were worshipping some of the deities that were featured in statues in the surrounding area. The pandits (priests) blessed these individuals and spoke devotional speeches before returning to the devotional songs that were played throughout the service. At some point during the service Aarti was performed. During this ritual the members attending the worship stood up from the ground and the pandit made a number of ceremonial actions towards some of the religious figures

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outlining the temple. During this part of the ceremony the pandit took a device that contained flames and blessed the figures. The flames in these regards are supposed to represent the light of knowledge. Camphor is the fuel used in this part of the ceremony and it burns out slowly as the ceremony progresses. After the ceremony I learned that it symbolizes the burning out of the ego when faced with the light of knowledge. After the service the members that attended all shared food together. In some regards, this mirrors the communion service held in Christian churches, except that it occurs after the service and includes a full-scale meal. In both instances, they represent the consummation of a blessed or holy entity. In conclusion, it's clear there are a variety of elements related to Hindu worship that are highly notable. This reflection essay has explored these various elements, including the customs and rituals that go into Hindu worship. Among the notable elements include the removing of shoes, the ceremonial songs, and the devotional worship by the pandits. Ultimately the Hindu worship represents a form of worship in some ways structurally similar to the Christian worship, with a large amount of unique elements.