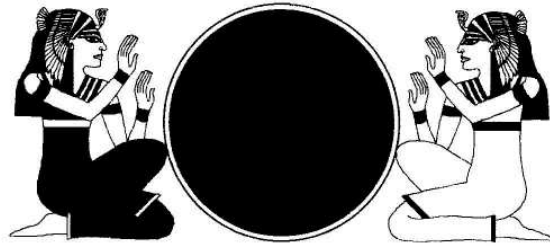


# Temple of the Dark Moon



## Lakshmi: Hindu Goddess of Purification and Prosperity

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*O Lakshmi, the one who has lotus-like eyes,  
Who has lotus in hand,  
Who is the most-dazzling white in complexion,  
Who has a garland full of fragrance of various plants,  
Who is the Goddess, Who is dear to Hari, Who is beautiful,  
Who provides wealth to all the three worlds!  
Please shower happiness on me.  
(author unknown)*

Known since pre-Buddhist times, Lakshmi is one of the more popular Goddesses in the Hindu pantheon. Since last epic period (ca. 400 AD) she has been associated with Vishnu as his consort, and plays the role of the model Hindu wife, obediently serving Her husband. With Her name being derived from Sanskrit word "Laksya", meaning "aim" or "goal, it is little wonder that Lakshmi is the Goddess associated with prosperity, well-being, royal power and illustriousness. She is embodiment of all these qualities and it is believed that when these qualities are evident, the Goddess is present or will soon reveal herself.

According to Hindu mythology, Lakshmi appears in one of the most compelling stories, that of the "Churning of the Milky Ocean". In this story, the Hindu Gods are at war against various demons (the Asuras) in order to gain their immortality. One day a wise sage offered

Indra, the Hindu Warrior God, a garland of sacred flowers, however, in his arrogance, Indra throws the flowers to the floor. This display of arrogance upsets Lakshmi, who leaves the realm of the Gods and enters into the Milky Ocean. Without her, the Gods were no longer blessed with success or fortune, and as the world becomes darker, the people on earth become greedy and no longer make offerings to the Gods. As the Gods begin to lose their power and the Asuras take control, Indra is instructed that Gods need to churn the Milky Ocean to regain Lakshmi and Her blessings, which include the elixir of life, a potion bestowing immortality, which would enable them to defeat the demons. This churning takes a thousand years before anything rises to the surface. However, among the treasures that did rise, was a beautiful woman standing on a lotus flower. This was Lakshmi, returning to the world.

Lakshmi is often depicted as being fair skinned, and having four arms. She is usually very finely dressed, and is surrounded with precious jewels, coins and other symbols of wealth and prosperity, which she offers to Her followers. To signify Her royal status, she is often flanked by elephants as well as Her “Vanaha” (sacred animal), which is a great white owl.

It is said that during the Autumn Full Moon (believed to be the brightest of the year), Lakshmi descends to Earth to take away the darkness of poverty, stagnation, and anger. Her owl guides Her into the darker area of people’s lives so that they can be enlightened.

In Bengal, northern India, one of the most holy festivals (or pujas) of Hindu calendar, that of Diwali, is specifically sacred to Lakshmi. Taking place on the New Moon, which usually occurs towards either the end of October or beginning of November, lamps are filled with coconut oil and are lit to signify victory of good over the evil within an individual. It is also during this time that Lakshmi is believed to bring peace and prosperity. Being a festival of wealth, special gold coins and utensils are purchased, as well as new clothing and jewellery. For businessmen, this time of the year is also very auspicious for opening up new accounts.

Creating an altar for Lakshmi can be as simple as filling a vase with some brightly coloured flowers. Her colours are said to be pink, red, gold and orange, and Her favourite scents are sandalwood and jasmine.

### **PERFORMING A PUJA TO LAKSHMI**

To perform a Lakshmi Puja at home, the first thing you must do is to clean the house. This is because as you are inviting the Goddess into your place and she particularly likes everything

to be neat and clean. Then place a clean cloth upon your altar and on it, create a bed of rice. On top of this, place a small bowl (a kalash) which is filled 3/4 full with water. Place a flower, a clean coin and some rice into the kalash as well. On either side of the kalash, place images or statues of both Ganesha (the Hindu Elephant God who is the Lord of Auspicious Beginnings) and Lakshmi.

Before Laskhmi is honoured, Ganesha, must be called upon. One way of doing this is to simply repeat "Om Ganesha" three times and then offer up some kind of sweet. When this is done, petitions or requests to Laskhmi can then be made. Laskhmi is also fond of sweets, in particular those made from coconut or puffed rice. Fruit is also another offering that the Goddess of purity and prosperity will receive very favourably.

Hold the flower and some rice while you invoke Lakshmi. This can be a personal communion with Her or you may wish to recite one of the following Sanskrit mantra which are dedicated to Her (I use the English translation):

*"Sarvagay Sarvavarday Sarvadushtbhaydkree  
Sarvadukhaharay Devi Mahalakshmi Namostutay".*

English meaning: "O Maa Lakshmi, you know everything, you grant favours to all, you are a terror to the evil and your art removes the misery of all. O Propitious Goddess, I surrender to you."

*"Siddhi Buddhipraday Devi Bhuktimuktipradayeenee  
Mantramurtay Sada Devi Mahalakshmi Namostutay".*

English meaning: "O Divine Goddess, you are the provider of success and intelligence. You are the benefactor of both worldly pleasure and freedom. The magical sound symbols-the Mantras, verily comprise their form with your grace. Propitious Mother, I surrender to you always."

Repeat the mantras until you feel Her presence. Then sprinkle the flowers and rice on Her statue or image. Add any other offerings you may have, such as coconut, fruits, and sweets. Then meditate on the Goddess's image again.

**About the Author:**

Frances first connected with the Divine Feminine in the late 1980s. This connection was strengthened in 1993 when during a Wiccan rite known as "Drawing Down the Moon" the great Egyptian Goddess Isis made Her presence felt.

Since that time Frances has continued to strengthen her personal relationship with the Divine Feminine - the Ancient Matriarch - the Goddess. Now Frances is drawn to share her knowledge and experience with others in order to assist them to re-connect with this ancient, yet powerful force.

Since 2002 Frances has been regularly writing for Australia's No.1 spiritual lifestyle magazine, "Insight", and her articles have appeared in over 10 separate publications around the world, including "SageWoman" and the 2008 Llewellyn "Witches" calendar. She has also appeared in the "Sunday Mail", the "Messenger" and the "Melbourne Age".

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