

धर्मसन्देश Dharma Sandesh

a quarterly newsletter of Bharatiya Mandir, Middletown, NY

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः। Let noble thoughts come to us from everywhere. RigVeda 1.89.1

नमस्ते Namaste

ॐ – OM. With the blessings and grace of the Supreme Lord (परमात्मा), we are extremely proud to inform you that Dharma Sandesh is now in its fifth year of publication.

Seasons continue to change. After a harsh winter, we were blessed to have a beautiful spring. The summer season is here in full swing and with it are hope, joy, warmth, and fun.

We are eagerly awaiting many of our community students to graduate from their respective programs in school and college this year. To commemorate this, there will be a special Puja to Mata Saraswati by all the graduates on July 7, 2013. All students will be seeking the Divine Mother's blessings for all their future endeavors.

We will also be celebrating Sri Vara MahaLakshmi Vratam (श्री वरमहालक्ष्मी व्रतम्) in August, in the holy month of Shravana (श्रावण). Also in Shravana, we will be celebrating the birth of our Lord Sri Krishna (श्री कृष्ण). The festival will be marked by devout Puja, bhajans, dances, songs, music, and pomp.

In this issue, Dr. Padma Sundaram writes about Lord Hanuman, the powerful and strong, yet humble and obedient servant of Lord Rama.

We hope that readers will continue to enjoy reading these articles and gain some insight into our Sanatana Dharma. Let us all pray to the Paramaatma (परमात्मा) to shower His blessings upon all His children!!

Sincerely,

Your Editorial Board

Web: www.bharatiyamandir.org

Email: bmandir@bharatiyamandir.org

सुभाषिता Subhaashitaa

In this section, we present a Sanskrit quotation and its interpretation/meaning.

विद्वत्त्वं च नृपत्वं च नैव तुल्यं कदाचन ।
स्वदेशे पूज्यते राजा विद्वान् सर्वत्र पूज्यते ॥

vidvatvam-ca-nrupatvam-ca-naiva-tulyam-kadaacana |
svadeshe-pujyate-rajaa-vidvaan-sarvatra-pujyate ||

There can be no comparison between knowledge and royalty. The king is worshipped in his own kingdom. However, a knowledgeable man is worshipped everywhere.

Knowledge always trumps wealth, power, and other attributes in the end. A knowledgeable man is always highly respected and adored the world over. We should always respect knowledge and learning, and always strive to achieve more of the same.

Contributed by Dr. Narasim Banavara

साई प्रेरणा Baba's Teachings

In this section, we present a teaching of Sri Sai Baba.

Sri Satya Sai Baba spoke thus – “You can understand Radha only if you can fathom the depth of her thirst for Krishna. Radha believed that Krishna is the Aadhar (basis). She performed Araadh (worship) in a continuous Dhara (stream). In fact she is Prakrithi (nature), another form of the Lord Himself. How can those, who are full of evil tendencies and impulses, grasp that relationship? The recitation of the name of the Lord is the best method for cleansing the mind of all these evil impulses. If you have pure and steady faith in the Lord, He will provide for you, not just

food, but the nectar of immortality itself. You have the potential in you to make Him grant you that boon.

Contributed by Dr. Vijaya Dasari

ज्ञानविहार JnanaVihara

In this section, we present articles on Hinduism, Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, and related philosophy.

Sri Hanuman (श्री हनुमान्)

During the last Hanuman Jayanti (birthday of Lord Hanuman), Dr. Banavara told us a few facts about Lord Hanuman. They were very interesting and informative. So, I thought that I can try to write an article about Hanuman. It is very difficult to put it all in simple language, and I hope that this will give everyone, especially the kids and youth members, a chance to understand a little about Hanuman.



Hanuman is one of the divine entities in Hinduism. He is one of the most important and central characters in the epic Ramayana (रामायण). He

is also mentioned in the Mahabharata (महाभारत) and other Puranas. He is known by several other names like Anjaneya (आञ्जनेय), Bajrangbali (बजरंगबलि), etc., the meanings of which will come later on in the article.

Historical Perspective – there are many theories put forth by Eastern and Western scholars regarding Hanuman. Accordingly, Camille Burke, the author of *Ramkatha*, traces the origin of Hanuman to the pre-Aryan and pre-Dravidian era of aboriginal tribes of Central India. According to her, Valmiki Ramayana was based on older tribal ballads. E.F. Pergiter's (1852-1927) theory is that Hanuman was a proto-Dravidian deity and his name was sanskritized from an old Tamil name Aan Mandhi, which means a male

monkey. A Hindi writer, Ray Govindacharan (1976), has endorsed this view. Murray Emerson, another author, disagrees with this view as "mandhi" refers only to a female monkey. Whatever the historical discussions have been, Hanuman has been a central figure in the great epic Ramayana written by Sage Valmiki, and in the great Ramacharitamanas (श्री रामचरितमानस) written by Sage Tulasidas (तुलसीदास).



Birth and Childhood – Hanuman was born to humanoid creatures called Vanaras (वानर). Anjana (अञ्जना) was an apsara (अप्सरा - celestial damsel) and she was very beautiful. One day she saw a sage with a face like a monkey. She made fun of him and the sage got very angry. He remained calm and patient for a long time, but Anjana did not stop laughing and taunting him. The sage then cursed her that she would be born as a monkey on earth. Anjana became scared and very remorseful, and she begged the sage for mercy. The sage said that she could redeem herself when she gave birth to a son. In Valmiki Ramayana, it is said that Anjana met Kesari (son of sage Brihaspathi) and both of them performed intense penance and worship to Lord Shiva in the hope for a son. Pleased with their penance, Lord Shiva granted their wish.

At about the same time, King Dasharatha (राजा दशरथ) was performing the Putrakameshti Yajna (पुत्रकामेष्टि यज्ञ) in order to have children. From the Agnikund (अग्निकुण्ड) came a sage and gave the King a cup full of the sacred pudding (payasam पायसम्) to be shared by his wives. When the King was taking it to his wives an eagle snatched a little of the pudding and

flew away. Vayu (वायु), the wind God, enabled the eagle to fly towards the forest where Anjana was praying to Shiva. Some of the pudding fell into the praying hands of Anjana, and when she consumed it Hanuman was born. Vayu helped Anjana get the pudding and, as directed by Lord Shiva, transferred his male energy into Anjana's womb. Thus Hanuman came to be called Kesari-nandan (केसरिनन्दन - son of



Kesari) and also Vayuputra (वायुपुत्र - son of Vayu).

Another version of Hanuman's birth is derived from the Vishnu Purana and Narada Purana. Once, Sage Narada wanted to marry a princess. So he requested Vishnu to transform his face just like Vishnu's so that the princess would garland him (Narada) in the Swayamvara (स्वयंवर). But Lord Vishnu transformed his face to that of a monkey. Sage Narada was unaware of this and he went to the Swayamvara. There, the princess laughed at his ape-like face. Narada was humiliated and he cursed Lord Vishnu saying that one day Lord Vishnu would have to depend on the Vanaras to complete his tasks.

At that point Lord Vishnu told Sage Narada that if Narada had married the princess, then he would have lost all his divine powers. Sage Narada repented cursing Vishnu, but Lord Vishnu consoled Narada by saying that this curse would lead to the birth of Hanuman in Ramavatara and, without Hanuman, Rama would not be able to kill Ravana.

In Indian mythology there are a lot of places that claim themselves as the birth place of Hanuman. Some of them are listed here. There is the Anjaneya Hill in Hampi near the Rishyamuka (ऋष्यमूक पर्वत) mountain on the banks of river Pampa in Karnataka. There is a Hanuman temple in Kaithal in Haryana by the name of AnjaniThila. Anjan, a small village in Gumba, houses Anjan Dham. There is Anjaneri Mountain in Nasik, and there is the Laksha Hill near Sujargarh in Rajasthan.

Childhood: When Anjaneya was born, the curse on Anjana was dissolved and she expressed a desire to go back to heaven. Baby Anjaneya asked her who would look after him and who would feed him, what would happen to his future and how would he live. Anjana replied that the brave Kesari was his father and the Wind God Vayu was his God-Father. Both of them would protect him. She also told Anjaneya that fruits as red and ripe as the rising sun would always be available in the forest, and those fruits would be his food and nourishment. Saying thus, Anjana kissed her son and departed for Heaven.

One day baby Hanuman saw the rising sun, red and round. He thought it was a fruit just as his mother had told him. He dashed full speed towards the Sun to eat it. Surya-Deva suddenly saw a monkey coming towards him. The monkey grew bigger and bigger as he neared the Sun. The hot rays of the Sun had no effect on him. This scared Surya Deva and he started calling for help from Lord Indra. Though Indra was surprised to hear Surya Deva calling for help, he went to see what was happening. When he saw the big monkey, Lord Indra asked him who he was. Hanuman told him that he was the son of Anjana and Kesari and that he was going to eat the red ripe fruit in front of him just as his mother had told him. Lord Indra tried to tell him that the red ripe fruit was actually the Sun God, the source of all light and life, and that Hanuman should go back to earth. But Hanuman did not listen.

Lord Indra got angry and struck Hanuman with his Vajra (वज्र – thunderbolt) wounding his chin. Hanuman began to fall to the ground and his cheeks began to swell enormously. Seeing this, Vayu became enraged. He carried Anjaneya to Lord Brahma and complained about Lord Indra. He then went underground to Patala Loka (पाताल लोक – the nether world) taking with him all the air. Suddenly, people

had no air to breathe and started getting asphyxiated. The earth became chaotic. Lord Brahma requested Vayu to come out of his seclusion. Vayu came out and Lord Brahma used his divine powers to cure Anjaneya of all his wounds. He then gave Hanuman a boon saying that no weapon would have any effect on Anjaneya, even the deadly Brahmastra (ब्रह्मास्त्र – equivalent to a nuclear weapon).

Lord Indra was ashamed of what he had done and granted Hanuman the boon of immense strength. He said that Hanuman would become as strong as his own weapon Vajra, the thunderbolt. Hence Hanuman is known as VajraangaBali (वज्राङ्गबलि, बजरङ्गबलि or BajarangBali). He was also given the name Hanuman (“hanuh” in Sanskrit means cheek and “maan” means prominent).



All the Gods gave boons to Hanuman to please Vayu. Lord Agni said that fire would not burn him. Lord Varuna said that he would be protected from water. Surya, the Sun God, gave him the boons of garima (गरिमा) and laghima (लघिमा), the supernatural powers of increasing and decreasing in size at will. Lord

Yama gave him the boon of immortality. Hence Hanuman is called Chiranjeevi (चिरञ्जीवि the Immortal One).

Kubera gave him the boon of contentment and happiness, and Vayu gave him the boon of enormous speed, more than himself. Lord Surya became Hanuman’s Guru and imparted to him the knowledge of all the Vedas, Shastras, sciences and arts. Hanuman is a scholar of grammar (व्याकरण पण्डित – Vyaakarana Pandita).

As a young boy, Hanuman was always very mischievous. He would tease all the sages and take their things away and hide them. To teach him a lesson, the sages gave him a mild curse that he would not remember his own abilities unless he was reminded of them by another person. In the Ramayana, Hanuman had to be reminded by Jambavantha (जाम्बवन्त) that he was indeed capable of flying across the ocean to Lanka.

Hanuman and Ramayana: The fact that Hanuman was very well learned is well established in the episode where Hanuman talks to Rama and Lakshmana in Sanskrit at the time when Sugreeva sends him to find out about the two strangers near the Rishyamuka mountain. Although Hanuman appears before Rama and Lakshmana in the guise of a young Brahmachari, after hearing Hanuman speak, Rama declares that the young boy cannot be anyone other than Hanuman. From here Hanuman becomes interwoven with Rama and helps him in initiating the everlasting friendship with Sugriva. He helps regain Sugriva’s honor and helps Rama kill Ravana.

While crossing the ocean to reach Lanka, Hanuman encounters a sea monster Surasa who wants to eat him. Hanuman tells her that he is on a mission on behalf of his master Rama and that he has to fulfill that mission; after the mission was completed, she could eat him. Hearing this Surasa says that if he could go into her mouth and come out, she would let him go. Using the boon given to him by Surya Deva, Hanuman is able to make himself very small in size. He goes into Surasa’s mouth and comes out of her mouth, thus fulfilling her wish.

Hanuman enters Lanka after killing another Rakshasi and locates Seetha Devi (सीतादेवी) in Ashoka Vana

(अशोकवन). He gives her the news of Rama and gives her the Mudrika ring (मुद्रिका) that Rama had given. He then wrecks the Ashoka Vana orchard and the garden. Ravana's son Indrajit uses the Brahmaastra and catches Hanuman and takes him to the court of Ravana. Hanuman had the boon from Lord Brahma that the Brahmaastra would not harm him. He still lets Indrajit tie him up and take him to Ravana. He even let them light fire to his tail since he knew that the fire would not cause him any harm. Instead he uses that fire to burn the city of Lanka to ashes.

During the war Lakshmana was severely wounded. The only way to bring him back to life was to use a plant named Sanjeevani (सञ्जीवनी), which grew only in the Himalayas. So Hanuman flew to the Himalayas



assuming a huge form and brought the whole mountain (Dronagiri द्रोणगिरि), on which the Sanjeevani herb grew. Thus he saved Lakshmana's life. During the course of the war both Rama and Lakshmana were hit with Sarpastra (सर्पास्त्र) and tied up by the serpents. Hanuman, whose knowledge is

vast, brought Garuda (गरुड – Vishnu's vahana) to untangle the serpents and free Rama and Lakshmana.

After Rama's coronation in Ayodhya, he gave gifts to all his friends but did not give anything to Hanuman. Seetha Devi could not understand this and she gave an expensive pearl necklace to Hanuman in appreciation of everything he had done for her. Hanuman proceeded to take each pearl apart and inspect it. He started throwing the pearls away. The onlookers were astonished and asked Hanuman why he was behaving in that way. Hanuman said that none of the pearls contain the images of Rama and Seetha, and so, they meant nothing to him. When the onlookers criticized him for his naiveté, Hanuman ripped open his chest and, to everyone's surprise, the images of Rama and Seetha were established in his heart.

The story of Hanuman is full of good values to be learnt by everyone. Hanuman served Rama with total devotion. He was always humble. After reading about Hanuman, if we can come away with these two values we have achieved a lot.

After Lord Rama's coronation, Hanuman wanted to be forever on earth as he wanted to hear Rama's name being chanted by people. Seetha Devi granted him his wish and said that Hanuman's image would be placed in a public place so that he could always hear Lord Rama's name when people chanted it.

Hanuman and Mahabharata: Hanuman and Bheema are brothers as Vayu is their father. Once, when the Pandavas were in exile in the forest (Vanavasa) Bheema was wandering in the forest. He came across a monkey with a long tail sprawled on the ground. Bheema asked the monkey to move his tail. The monkey told him to move the tail as he was too old and weak to do it himself. Bheema got angry and tried to move the tail with one hand. It did not budge. He tried with all his might, but to no avail. After trying several times and failing, Bheema realized his mistake and asked the monkey who he really was. Then Hanuman revealed his identity and embraced his brother. He taught Bheema humility and respect for all things, including the old and frail. Bheema then requested Hanuman to be near them during the war. Hanuman agreed and became the emblem on the flag flying on Arjuna's chariot.

During the Kurukshetra (कुरुक्षेत्र) war, usually Lord Krishna, who was functioning as the charioteer, would get down first from the chariot at the end of the day, and then Arjuna would follow suit. On the last day of the war, after the Pandavas won the war, Krishna asked Arjuna to get down from the chariot first. Though he was surprised, Arjuna obeyed Lord Krishna and did so. Lord Krishna then thanked Hanuman who was on the flag. Hanuman saluted Lord Krishna and flew away into the sky. Then Lord Krishna got down from the chariot. Instantly the chariot caught fire and burnt completely to ashes. Lord Krishna comforted a shocked Arjuna and said that the chariot was had been hit by so many celestial weapons and it withstood all the assaults only because of Hanuman and Lord Krishna. This is the power of Hanuman.



It is said that the Hanuman Chalisa (हनुमान चालीसा – forty verses praising Hanuman), written by Sage Tulasidas is so powerful that reading it or listening to it will drive away all fears and diseases.

Jai Hanuman!! (जय हनुमान् !!)

References:

- “Mahabharata” by Mrs. Kamala Subrahmanyam, published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan
- Mythological story www.kidsgen.com
- Wikipedia – Hanuman, Jaya Hanuman
- Miscellaneous sources

Contributed by Dr. Padma Sundaram.

TEMPLE ACTIVITIES / CELEBRATIONS

Bharatiya Mandir has been busy in several special celebrations, in addition to the regular activities like weekly Pujas.

The typical weekly schedule at Bharatiya Mandir is as follows:

Mondays: Shiv Stuti, Lingaastakam, Shiv Chalisa

Tuesdays: Ram Stuti, Hanuman Chalisa

Wednesdays: Vishnu Sahasranaama

Thursday: Sai Bhajans

Friday: Lakshmi Ashtottara Shata-Naama

Sundays: Abhishek and Havan.

Besides these regularly scheduled activities, the following celebrations were observed in the last quarter:

On March 10, devotees celebrated **Maha Shivaratri**. More than 150 people participated in the festivities, worshipping Lord Shiva. They performed Abhisheka to the Lord, and listened to several stories about the Lord. A significant and special component of this celebration was the Abhisheka and Puja to Lord Shiva by all the children of the Sunday school.

On March 26 and March 31, 2013, the festival of



colors, **Holi**, was celebrated. Both the children and the

adults played Holi with Shri Thakurji and with each other. It was a very happy occasion.



On April 13, we had **Mata Ka Jagran**. The program started with Mata Ki Jyot at 9:30 pm, and Mata Ke Bhajan continued throughout the night. This was the first time in the Mandir that an all-night Jagran was conducted. We had quite a few Yajmans for this event. The full attendance of devotees was very encouraging.

On April 20, 2013 we celebrated **Sri Ram Navami**, the birth of our Lord Rama. The recitation of Sunder Kaand of Sri Tulsi Ramayan was the main program that day. On April 25, 2013 we celebrated **Sri Hanuman Jayanti**.



The fourteenth anniversary of the Mandir was observed on May 5th, 2013. The Mandir was inaugurated on May 2, 1999. On May 5, 2013, we had more than 175 devotees present to celebrate the occasion with us. As usual, Kiran Kothari and Pragnaben Purohit, along with Tusharbhai Amin, sang many Bhajans. The highlight of the day was a play from our **Sunday school children**. More than sixteen children participated in the play. All the children were awarded certificates from the Mandir Board of Directors. Another highlight of the day was a solo Kathak Dance performance by **Akshani Patel** and a



solo Bharatanatyam dance performance, dedicated to Lord Shiva, by **Suma Srishaila**.

On May 11, 2013 we celebrated Sri Srinivasa Kalyana Mahotsavam (श्री श्रीनिवास कल्याण महोत्सवम्) – the celestial wedding ceremony of Lord Srinivasa / Venkateshwara / Balaji / Vishnu with SriDevi (श्रीदेवी) and BhuDevi (भूदेवी), the spiritual and material



energies of Devi MahaLakshmi (देवी महालक्ष्मी).

The Kalyana Mahotsavam was celebrated in a Vedic wedding style, replete with all the required Samskaras (संस्कार) of Vaagdaanam (वाग्दानम्) – engagement,

Vara Ahwanam (वर आह्वानम् or Baaraat बारात) –
inviting the bridegroom, Vara Puja (वरपूजा) –
worshipping the bridegroom, Madhuparkam (मधुपर्कम्)
– offering sip of sweetened milk to the bridegroom,



Mangala Snanam (मङ्गलस्नानम्) – ritual bath for both
the bride and bridegroom, Alankaram (अलङ्कारम्) –
dressing of the bride and bridegroom, Nirikshanam
(निरीक्षणम्) – waiting for the Muhurtha with a
separating cloth between the bride and groom, Jaya-
Mala (जयमाला) – exchange of garlands, Kanya
Daanam (कन्यादानम्) – offering the bride to the
groom's family, Akshataropanam (अक्षतारोपणम्) –
showering of rice for fertility and longevity, Pratisara
Bandhanam (प्रतिसर बन्धनम्), also called Raksha
Bandhanam (रक्षाबन्धनम्) – tying of the sacred thread to
ward off evil, Maangalya Dhaaranam (माङ्गल्यधारणम्) –
tying of the Mangala Sutra (मङ्गलसूत्र), Laaja Homam



(लाजाहोमम्) – offering puffed rice to Lord Agni (अग्नि),
the Lord of the Yajna (यज्ञ), and Mangalam (मङ्गलम्) -
benediction. This was followed by a delicious lunch.
This event was a great success.

Summer Day Camp for Children and Senior Citizens

Saturday, August 24 and Sunday, August 25,
2013, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm; **Pre-registration
required.** Please call PunditJi at 845-361-3055 or
go to www.bharatiyamandir.org

A **special Puja** for the 2013 graduates of our
community will be held on Sunday, July 7, 2013
at 10.30 am at the Mandir. All the graduates
(School & College) are invited to join. Please
call PunditJi at 845-361-3055, if you plan to join
this Puja. A Puja Thali will be reserved for you.
Please pass the word around. Thank you.

Some Upcoming Special Mandir Events

Sri Ramayana Akhand Paath	Saturday, June 29 until Sunday, June 30
Special Puja for Graduates	Sunday, July 7
General Body Meeting	Sunday, July 7
Dakshinayana Punya Kaalam	Tuesday, July 16
Sri Guru Purnima	Monday, July 22
Sri Vara-Maha-Lakshmi Vratam	Friday, Aug 16
Summer Day Camp for Children and Senior Citizens	Saturday, Aug 24 and Sunday, Aug 25
Sri Krishna Janmaashtami	Wednesday, Aug 28

Mrs. Sangeeta and Mr. Deepak Kumar have
generously sponsored the printing of copies of this
issue of Dharma Sandesh. Devotees may note that all
the writing of the content and the editing of the
newsletter are strictly voluntary.

Our quarterly newsletter is called “**Dharma
Sandesh**” (धर्मसन्देश). “Dharma”, in simple
terms, refers to righteousness, conduct, a sense of
duty, virtue, and the ultimate truth. “Sandesh”
means a message or news. So, Dharma Sandesh
refers to a message of Dharma.

Dharma Sandesh Newsletter Editorial Board:

Dr. Narasim Banavara

Dr. Padma Sundaram

Dr. K.N. Sundaram