

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 Spirit (परमात्मा), we bring to our dear readers this issue of Bharatiya Mandir's quarterly newsletter "Dharma Sandesh".

Winter has arrived in our midst already. Although Surya Deva is shining brightly outside as I write this newsletter, Vayu Deva is blowing with great force, and it is freezing outside. This is a reminder of the upcoming harsh winter. Perhaps the harshness of the winter will be mitigated by the warmth of our devotion to the Lord and the warmth of the Agni who will be blazing in all His glory during the Sri Bhagavad Gita Yajna on December 18 at the Mandir.

Vaikunta Ekadashi (वैकुण्ठ एकादशी) is the time when the doors of the Lord's abode open for all His true devotees. We urge people to use this opportunity to pray to the Lord Almighty and seek His blessings. This year, Vaikunta Ekadashi falls on December 16. That is also the day of Sri Gita Jayanti, the day when Lord Krishna explained the Gita to Arjuna.

We will usher in the New Year with Puja and Homa (Yajna) to Lord Ganapati. Let us pray to Him to remove all obstacles and grant us peace, prosperity and happiness in the upcoming year.

We have Lohri and Makara Sankranti / Pongal in January to help us get into a festive mood and celebrate the harvest festivals (in India) and renew the community spirit. Another festive occasion will arrive in February in the form of Vasant Panchami.

In this issue of Dharma Sandesh, we present an article on Dashaavatara, the ten primary Avatars (incarnations) of Lord Vishnu. The article will be presented in two parts due to space constraints. The

first part is appearing in this issue and the second part will appear in the next issue of this newsletter.

Dr. Padma Sundaram continues to write on the "Consorts of Lord MahaVishnu". In this issue, she tells us about Devi Jambavati and Devi Satyabhama, the second and third consorts of Lord Krishna. Dr. Madhu P. Godsay writes about the "Hindu View on Truth". This is an excellent article that portrays the views held by many Hindus on Truth (सत्य).

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

Sincerely,
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सुभाषिता Subhaashitaa

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

अष्टादश पुराणानां सारं व्यासेन कीर्तितम् ।
परोपकारः पुण्याय पापाय परपीडनम् ॥
ashtaadasha-puraanaanaam-saaram-vyasena-kirtitam
paropakaarah-punyaaya-paapaaya-parapidanam ॥

The essence of the eighteen Puranas composed by Sage Veda Vyasa is as follows: helping others leads to purification, while harming others leads to sin.

The Puranas, including the Mahabharata, contain all the characteristics that humans may ever exhibit. They are a comprehensive repository of all the traits and behaviors of human beings.

The essence of all the stories of the Puranas is the same. It states the same notion – be good and help others. If you cannot do that, at least do not harm others. If you harm others, you will beget sin.

Contributed by Dr. Narasim Banavara

साई प्रेरणा Baba's Teachings

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

Sri Sai Baba spoke thus – “Today, the experience and wisdom of great seers who have unveiled the mystery of the cosmos and their feelings of universal love are not appreciated, accepted, and respected. All religious dogmas, except a few, can easily be harmonized and reconciled. The same God is extolled and adored under various names through varied ceremonial rituals in many religions. In every age, for every race, God has sent prophets to establish peace and goodwill. Presently, many religions have spread far and wide across the world and have lost fraternal feelings over time. There is an urgent need for harmony. All great people are images of God. There is only one single caste in the realm of God and all belong to one nation, the Divine Fellowship. You must interest yourself in understanding the practices and beliefs of the others. Only then you can, with cleansed mind and loving heart, attain the Divine Presence. – Sutra Vahini, Chapter 3 – Harmony of all Religions.

Contributed by Dr. Vijaya Dasari

ज्ञानविहार JnanaVihara

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

Dashaavataara – Part I दशावतार – १

Among the Trinity (त्रिमूर्ति) Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva, the sustainer of the Universe Lord Vishnu has had to come down to Earth in various incarnations (Avatara = अवतार) several times in order to protect His devotees, annihilate evil and demonic forces, establish Dharma, and maintain social and cosmic order in the Universe. This article talks about,

in brief, the ten primary incarnations of Lord Vishnu (दशावतार = दश + अवतार, meaning ten incarnations), although there are many, many more such Avataras (more than hundred) of Lord Vishnu, as mentioned in the Sri Bhagavata Purana and other scriptures.

The term “Avatara” refers to a deliberate descent, appearance, incarnation or manifestation of the Supreme Spirit (परमात्मा) to achieve a specific purpose.

The term “Avatara” is derived from the verbal root “त् = tr” meaning “cross-over” and “अव = ava” meaning “away or down” signifying that the Avatara is the manifestation of the Supreme Spirit away from His abode (Vaikunta) crossing over down to Earth.



The Puranas and the Sri Guru Charitra give several reasons for the Avatara of Lord Vishnu. Most notably, the story goes that Lord Vishnu, in order to save His dear devotee Ambareesha from the wrathful curse of Sage Durvasa, asked to be cursed instead. As a result of this curse, which was the Lord's own Leela (लीला) and a blessing in disguise, Lord Vishnu had to incarnate on Earth ten times.

Lord Krishna (a complete manifestation of Lord Vishnu - पूर्णावतार) tells Arjuna,

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानं अधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

Srimad Bhagavad Gita, IV-7,8

meaning, whenever Dharma (righteousness) begins to decay and Adharma (unrighteousness) begins to rise, then I embody myself and manifest era after era for the protection of the good, the destruction of the evil, and for the establishment of Dharma.

The ten primary Avataras of Lord Vishnu are Matsya (the fish), Kurma (the tortoise), Varaha (the boar), Narasimha (the man-lion), Vamana (the dwarf Brahmin), Parashurama (the Brahmin with the axe), Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki (the knight). Some schools of thought do not include Buddha as an Avatara and, instead, include Balarama.

The first four of these Avatars have occurred in Krita (Satya) Yuga and the next three have occurred in Treta Yuga. Krishna appeared towards the end of the Dwapara Yuga. Buddha appeared in the Kali Yuga, and Kalki is yet to come. He is expected to come towards the end of the Kali Yuga and establish order in this chaotic world so that the next cycle of Yugas can start with the Krita (Satya) Yuga.

The question could arise in some people's minds that if Lord Vishnu is so powerful so as to sustain the Universe, then why can't He destroy the evil forces, sustain the good forces, and establish the Cosmic Order in the Universe from wherever He resides?

The Avatara is a very important aspect of our Hindu religion. While the Lord Almighty can definitely do everything He likes from wherever He resides, He wants us people to know and be reassured that He is not some impersonal force far, far away, but that He is always close by and looking after us. He can come to us as a lowly creature (a fish, a tortoise, a boar, or even a dog as in the case of Lord Dattatreya) so that we may feel sublime. He debases Himself so that we may feel uplifted and ennobled. He demotes Himself to our level so that we may be promoted to His level. He humbles Himself to teach us how humble we are and should be.

He comes to us as a king and father (Sri Rama) so that we may feel safe under His rule and so that we may emulate His every action. He comes to us as a friend (Sri Krishna) so that we can play with Him, sing and dance with Him, forget our superiority and inferiority complexes and become just simple humans. He makes us feel near and dear to Him so that we can feel His divine presence everywhere around us as well as within ourselves.

Parallels can also be drawn between Lord Vishnu's ten Avatars and the process of evolution in the world (for example, according to Darwin's theory). Matsya Avatara relates to the aquatic creatures that first inhabited the Earth (in the Cambrian period). Then came amphibians (like Kurma the tortoise) that could live both on land and in water (in the Mississippian period). They were followed by land animals that were primarily herbivores like the boar (Varaha), and then by carnivores like the lion (Narasimha). In fact, the Narasimha Avatara also indicates the evolution into human form from the animal form.

The Vamana Avatara is indicative of the first short-statured Homo Sapiens (human form in the Pliocene period). Then came Parashurama, who demonstrates similarities with the modern man of the Iron Age in the Quaternary period. Sri Rama symbolizes the Perfect Human Being, and Sri Krishna epitomizes the Super-Human Being. Buddha represents the self-actualized or enlightened human, and Kalki is representative of the apocalyptic form yet to come. Once the apocalypse occurs, the evolution cycle starts all over again.

Due to limited space, the descriptions of the Dasha Avatars will be given in two parts. In this issue of Dharma Sandesh, only the first four Avatars are described.

1. Matsya Avatara – in this Avatara, Lord Vishnu incarnated as a fish (मत्स्य Matsya = fish). At the end of one Kalpa (eon, equal to 4.32 billion years, also equal to one day of Lord Brahma), Lord Brahma was tired after all the creation work in that Kalpa. As he became drowsy and yawned, the Vedas slipped out of his mouth. At that time, a demon by the name of Hayagriva (meaning horse-faced) stole the Vedas.

Lord Vishnu noticed this. He could have defeated the demon right then and there by His Sankalpa. But He decided to accomplish two tasks with one incarnation. At that same time, a righteous king named Satyavrata Manu (सत्यव्रत मनु) was performing severe penance for thousands of years. One day as he was performing Sandhya Vandana (सन्ध्यावन्दना) in the river, a small fish came into his hands. Just as the king was about to



throw the fish back into the river, the fish requested the king to save its life. Heeding its request, the king put the fish into a jar of water (कमण्डलु - Kamandalu) and brought it to his palace. But the fish started growing and, soon, the jar was not big enough for it. Then the king placed the fish in a bigger vessel, but the fish outgrew that vessel in no time.

Then the king brought the fish to a well, pond, lake and river, but it soon outgrew each body of water. Then the king brought the mighty fish to the ocean. The fish grew to an enormous size in a matter of seconds.

King Manu realized that the fish was none other than Lord Vishnu Himself and he prayed fervently to the Lord. Then Lord Vishnu appeared before Manu in His true form. He said that there would be a colossal deluge (प्रलय - Pralaya) on the seventh day from that day and that the world would be submerged. The Lord asked Manu to build a big boat and take the seven divine sages (सप्तर्षि), seeds of all plants and animals of all species, and collect them in the boat. He also said that He would appear as Matsya again and lead the boat to higher ground (the Himalayas) and safety in that deluge so that they could be safe and so that creation could continue. King Manu began the process of building the boat and collecting the different plants and animals.

Meanwhile, Lord Vishnu, in His Matsya Avatara, dove to the bottom of the ocean in search of Hayagriva, the horse-faced demon who had stolen the Vedas from Lord Brahma. Matsya dove into the depths of the ocean, battled with Hayagriva and finally killed him. He then restored the Vedas to their rightful place, that is, with Lord Brahma. Some stories also state that Lord Vishnu assumed the form of Hayagriva (हयग्रीव - horse-faced) in order to kill the demon Hayagriva, in accordance with a boon that the demon had from Goddess Durga. So, Hayagriva is also another Avatara of Lord Vishnu.

True to his word, after seven days the Lord appeared before Manu. The king tied the boat to the fish using the royal serpent Vasuki. The fish led them through the rough waves of the raging ocean. They stayed afloat all through the night of Lord Brahma (one Kalpa). Throughout the journey, Lord Vishnu imparted divine knowledge to King Manu and the seven sages. That is known as the Matsya Purana (मत्स्य पुराण). Finally Matsya took all of them to higher and safer ground. At the beginning of the new era, King Manu, with the blessings of Lord Vishnu, started the process of procreation for the new era.

2. Kurma Avatara – in this Avatara, Lord Vishnu assumed the form of a tortoise (कूर्म Kurma = tortoise). The Suras (Devas) and the Asuras, although being half-brothers, were constantly fighting among themselves.

Once, falling under the curse of Sage Durvasa, the Gods lost all their powers, luster, and immortality

status. They feared for their lives under attack from the Asuras. So, they all approached Lord Vishnu who told them that they could regain their immortality, strength, glory and power if they drank the Amritha (अमृत - Nectar of Immortality) that could be obtained by churning (समुद्रमन्थन) the Ocean of Milk (क्षीरसागर) with all medicinal plants and herbs.

Having lost their prowess, the Devas could not perform this tedious task. So, they appealed to the Asuras for help and, in return, promised the Asuras an equal share in the Amritha. Both parties headed to Mount Mandara to bring it to the Ocean of Milk as a churner. Mount Mandara, being extremely heavy, crushed both the Devas and the Asuras. When they prayed to Lord Vishnu for help, Lord Vishnu lifted



Mount Mandara and had Garuda carry it to the ocean.

Vasuki, the great serpent, was used as the rope for the churning. The Asuras did not

want to hold Vasuki's tail; so, they opted to hold the head. The Devas held the tail. They began churning. The hordes of Devas and Asuras were no match for the mighty and heavy Mount Mandara, which began sinking into the ocean.

Lord Vishnu immediately assumed the form of a tortoise (Kurma), dove into the ocean and supported the sinking mountain on His back. The Devas and Asuras were happy and continued the churning with Kurma supporting the mountain. But soon they became tired. Seeing that, Kurma took over the churning.

Kurma started churning the ocean with immense force. Huge waves started rising and falling. The first item to rise out of the ocean was Haalahala (हालाहल), a deadly poison that represented the impurities of the ocean. The poison was so toxic and potent that it affected the breathing and began causing blindness to the Devas and Asuras. There was chaos all around. Everyone was screaming for help. They all began to pray to Lord Shiva to help ease their pain.

The ever-benevolent Lord Shiva collected the deadly Haalahala in His hands and drank it completely with ease. But Goddess Parvati immediately closed Her hands around Lord Shiva's throat so that the poison would not go down His throat.

The deadly poison settled in the Lord's throat turning His throat blue. Therefore, Lord Shiva is also called Neelakanta (नीलकण्ठ - the One with the blue throat) and Vishakanta (विषकण्ठ - the One with the poison in His throat). After the removal of the poison, the air became clean. The chaos and fear of death were over and peace returned.



Hence, Lord Shiva is also called Shankara (शङ्कर = शम् + कर = peace + maker).

After the removal of the poison, several valuable treasures emerged from the ocean, including Surabhi (the divine cow), Airavata (the divine elephant), Uchhaishravas (the divine horse), Chandra (the moon), Sri MahaLakshmi (whom Lord Vishnu married), Apsaras (heavenly nymphs), Vaaruni (wine), and Parijatha (the divine tree). Finally, Dhanvantari, the divine physician, also an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, emerged with the golden pitcher filled with Amritha. Immediately, the Devas and Asuras started fighting among themselves stating that the Amritha belonged to only them.



Seeing this, Lord Vishnu assumed the form of Mohini (मोहिनी), an extremely bewitching damsel. This damsel caught the attention of the Devas and the Asuras by performing intoxicating dances. Everyone was so

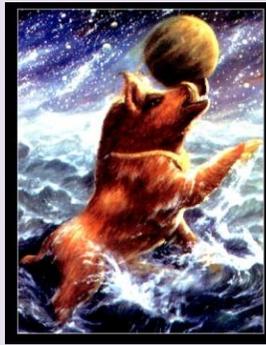
enticed with Her charm, beauty and magnetism that they agreed to give up their fight and allow her to distribute the Amritha among them, with no questions asked. Mohini began to distribute the Amritha among the Devas first. By the time She reached the Asuras, all the Amritha was completed. Then Mohini transformed into Lord Vishnu and disappeared. In this way, Lord Vishnu ensured that the evil and demonic

forces would not become immortal and only good and benevolent forces would be everlasting.

The Asuras realized the trickery played on them. They retaliated, but were no match for the newly energized Devas. The Devas defeated the Asuras and regained their glory, strength and prowess.

3. Varaha Avatara – in this Avatara, Lord Vishnu manifested as a Varaha (वराह = boar) to rescue Mother Earth (भूदेवी) from the evil clutches of the demon Hiranyaaksha.

Jaya and Vijaya, the doorkeepers of Vaikunta, Lord Vishnu's abode, were once cursed by divine sages. As part of the curse, they were first born as the cruel brothers Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaaksha. Both brothers were strong and powerful, but arrogant and cruel. They spent their time tormenting virtuous



people and vanquishing the Devas. Hiranyaaksha went so far as to usurp Mother Earth and hide her deep under the ocean in Patala in slime and grit. When the Devas prayed to Lord Vishnu to protect them, the Lord appeared as a tiny boar from Lord Brahma's nostril.

The boar soon grew to a gigantic size. Its mighty roar reverberated throughout the Universe. It took a giant leap and delved into the depths of the ocean. It dug deep into the fathomless Patala and held Mother Earth in its horns. Meanwhile, Hiranyaaksha came to attack Varaha and began insulting Varaha. The boar made sure that Mother Earth was safe in her proper place in the orbit and then turned its attention towards Hiranyaaksha. A great battle ensued, in which Varaha gored the demon Hiranyaaksha with the same horns in which He had gently held Mother Earth. Lord Vishnu proves time and again that in order to protect and save His true devotees, He will assume the lowliest of forms and dig through slime and dirt as well.

4. Narasimha Avatara – in this Avatara, Lord Vishnu incarnated as Narasimha (नरसिंह) – half-man (Nara), half-lion (Simha) to vanquish the evil demon Hiranyakashipu and to protect His dear devotee Prahlada, the son of Hiranyakashipu.

After the death of his brother Hiranyaaksha at the horns of Varaha, Hiranyakashipu vowed revenge. To gain more power, he performed severe penance and had Lord Brahma appear before him. He sought a boon where he could not be killed by man or animal, neither inside nor outside any residence, neither in the sky nor on the ground, neither during the day nor at night, not by any weapon, and not by any being created by Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma granted him the boon.

Armed with that boon, Hiranyakashipu became even more arrogant and haughty. He began terrorizing all people on earth as well as the Gods in the Heavens. He made everyone subservient to him. However, he found an enemy in his own son Prahlada, who was an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu. This made Hiranyakashipu extremely angry. He tried advising his son to abandon his worship of Lord Vishnu. He tried threatening his son with death. None of his tactics worked.

In his anger, Hiranyakashipu ordered his attendants to kill Prahlada. The attendants tried several ways to kill Prahlada, but each time Prahlada emerged unscathed.



Hiranyakashipu was furious. He dragged his son around the palace and asked him to show where his beloved Vishnu was. Prahlada responded by saying that Lord Vishnu was present everywhere. In

his anger, Hiranyakashipu hit a pillar in the palace with his mace and said that if Vishnu was in that pillar, then he would kill Him, and if He was not there, then he would kill Prahlada. When Hiranyakashipu hit the pillar, Lord Vishnu emerged as Narasimha. The Lord fought with Hiranyakashipu and finally vanquished him. In the end, Lord Narasimha put Hiranyakashipu on His lap, sat on the threshold of the palace and dug his claws deep into Hiranyakashipu's belly and disemboweled him, thus killing him.

It was twilight, meaning neither day nor night. Lord Narasimha was neither human nor animal nor a demigod. He was half-man, half-lion. He was not a creature that Lord Brahma created. He was self-incarnate. He was sitting on the threshold of the

palace. So He was neither inside nor outside. He put Hiranyakashipu on His lap, meaning Hiranyakashipu was neither on the earth nor in the sky. The Lord used His claws to kill the demon. So, no weapon was used, animate or inanimate. So, keeping in line with Lord Brahma's boon, Lord Narasimha still managed to vanquish Hiranyakashipu.

Later, Lord Narasimha blessed Prahlada and put him on his father's throne. Prahlada ruled over his father's kingdom as a just and pious ruler.

to be continued...

Sources: Sri Hari-Vamsha Puranam; Sri Bhagavatha Puranam; Sri Guru Charithra; www.salagram.net; www.wikipedia.org; and other sources.

Contributed by Dr. Narasim Banavara

Consorts of Lord MahaVishnu – Part 3

JAMBAVATI AND SATYABHAMA

The stories of these two wives of Lord Krishna have to be explained together as the circumstances are somewhat similar. Lord Krishna's second wife was named Jambavati (जाम्बवती) and the third wife was named Satyabhama (सत्यभामा).

It is said in the Puranas that Satyabhama is the incarnation of Bhudevi (भूदेवी – Mother Earth). She was born as the daughter of a very prestigious person by name Satrajit, a Yadava living in Dwaraka. Lord Surya (the Sun God) had given Satrajit a very precious jewel named Syamanthaka (स्यमन्तक मणि). Satrajit was very possessive of that jewel and he refused to give it to Lord Krishna for safe-keeping.

One day Satrajit's brother Prasena wore the jewel and went hunting. He was killed by a lion, and the lion took the jewel. Later, Jambavan (जाम्बवान् – the great bear) killed the lion, got the jewel and gave it to his son to play with. Hearing of his brother's death, Satrajit was very angry and thought that Lord Krishna had killed his brother for the sake of the jewel. Lord Krishna wanted to clear his name and went looking for the jewel. Along the way, He went to Jambavan's cave and saw Jambavan's son playing with the jewel. Then a very fierce fight followed, and it lasted for 28 days. In the end, Lord Krishna won the battle and

Jambavan recognized Lord Krishna as Lord Rama from the Treta Yuga. He apologized profusely for not recognizing the Lord and for fighting Him. In return, he gave the jewel back and requested Lord Krishna to marry his daughter Jambavati. Lord Krishna, being very generous, married Jambavati.

Lord Krishna returned to Dwaraka and gave the jewel back to Satrajit. Now Satrajit was really ashamed since he had suspected Lord Krishna as the culprit. He not only offered his daughter Satyabhama in marriage but also gave Lord Krishna the jewel. But Lord Krishna accepted Satyabhama as his wife but refused to take the jewel.

Satyabhama was a very strong willed and a very proud person. She really loved Lord Krishna with all her heart and also thought that the Lord loved her the most. She was a very brave woman but had a very bad temper. Lord Krishna liked all her qualities, but liked to tease her so that she would shed her pride. It is said that Satyabhama was the one that vanquished the demon Narakasura in a fierce battle. That is why during Deepavali, Naraka Chaturdasi is celebrated in several parts of India.

Sage Narada also liked to tease Satyabhama and have fun at her expense. One day he came to Satyabhama's house and said that Devi Rukmini had real control over Lord Krishna's heart. This made Satyabhama very angry. Sage Narada also said that all her wealth was not equal to Lord Krishna's weight. This made Satyabhama even angrier. She wanted to prove Narada wrong. She took an oath that she would put Lord Krishna on one side of the balance (scale) and all her wealth on the other. Now Narada said that if she lost this bet then Lord Krishna would become a slave to Narada. This did not disturb Satyabhama and she went on to amass all her wealth and the wealth of the other wives of Lord Krishna. Even then the scale did not move. Satyabhama became desperate. She swallowed her pride and asked Rukmini for help. Now Rukmini placed one leaf of the sacred Tulasi plant. The scales tipped and the side with all the wealth weighed down. This was a humbling experience for Satyabhama. This goes to show how a humble offering is greater than all the material wealth.

There are several episodes where Satyabhama's pride was brought down by Lord Krishna with the help of others, especially Sage Narada. Another episode

mentioned in the Puranas is called the story of Parijata Tree (पारिजात – Nyctanthes Arbor Tristis). It is said that the Parijata tree grew only in Heaven in Lord Indra's palace. One day Lord Krishna brought the tree to earth to give it to Rukmini. When Satyabhama found out about this, she had a temper tantrum. So, Lord Krishna planted the tree in Satyabhama's palace. He planted it so close to the wall separating Satyabhama's palace from Rukmini's palace. The tree bent over the wall and all the blooms fell in Rukmini's compound. This infuriated Satyabhama, but at the same time she understood why the Lord had done that.

Thus Lord Krishna lived harmoniously with his three wives. However, Jambavati has always been in the background in all stories and episodes concerning Lord Krishna's wives.

Sources: Sri Vishnu Purana, Srimad Bhagavatam, and Krishnavatara by K.M.Munshi
Contributed by Dr. Padma Sundaram.

Hindu View on Truth

1. For a Hindu, truth (Satya = सत्य) is synonymous with God. God is the final truth, and it is the duty of every Hindu to realize this truth during his/her lifetime.
2. God as truth is not relative. It is absolute! It withstands all inquiries from all possible ways and means of knowledge, and cannot be contradicted.
3. It is beyond time, space and materials, and this view can be logically confirmed by various means of knowledge at our disposal.
4. Truth, once we descend from the level of the Absolute, can be defined in many ways: empirical and relative or superimposed truth. Various criteria, such as perceptibility/utility, durability or majority can be applied to empirical truth. Superimposed truth is very relative. What I take as truth may not be the one for another, e.g. gold vs. stocks for investing.
5. Truth in practice becomes a value, such as I want others to speak truth to me, speaking the truth is religion for me, etc. The scriptures confirm speaking the truth as good behavior. It is included in other behavior norms as no-injury (non-violence), humility, charity, all based on the same consideration of how I would like others to treat me. There are natural and universal norms, stemming from The Lord, The Truth.

The non-observance of these norms causes conflicts and stress for us. In practice, speaking is the important way for the expression of truth. Hindu scriptures, especially Sri Bhagavad Gita states: “speech which does not cause agitation in others’ mind, which is true, pleasing and beneficial is an excellent discipline”. Another edict is: “speak the truth that is pleasant; however, do not speak unpleasantly although it may be the truth. Similarly, do not speak untruth even though it may be pleasant to hear”. This is an old tradition. Thus, an Indian tradition with respect to truth advises us to use caution.

Spirituality- Strength- Power: as truth itself is nothing but the Lord, the truthful person is spirituality in itself. All saints observed truthfulness at the expense of their lives. Sri Gita again declares that ‘where there is truth or Lord, goodness, victory, glory and righteousness prevails’.

Power: Yoga philosophy, another glorious tradition of Hindus says: A person following the truthfulness and a Yogi firmly established in truthfulness obtains the power which gives him/her what he/she wants without efforts. His wish becomes so powerful that the things start happening accordingly. This is seen when we ask for blessings from a saint. His mere wish – a word becomes the real thing

Thus, if a person establishes himself in real truthfulness, the glory, power, victory and all the Lord’s attributes are on his side.

Some scriptural sayings about ‘Truth’:

सत्यमेव जयते नानृतम् । satyameva jayate, naanritam:

Ultimately truth prevails, not untruth.

सच्चिदानन्दम् । sat-chit-anand: Lord is truth, consciousness and bliss.

सत्यं-शिवं-सुन्दरम् । satyam-shivam-sundaram: Lord is truth, welfare and beauty.

नाभावो विद्यते सतः । nabhavo vidyate satah: Truth never ceases to be.

नास्ति सत्यात् परोधर्मः । naasti satyat parodharmah:

There is no religion but truth.

ऋतं च सत्यं च अभीद्धात् तपसो अध्यजायत । ritam cha satyam cha abhidhat tapaso adhyajaayata:

Truth was before creation and truth has controlled all the elements of creation.

सत्यपूतां वदेद् वाचम् । satyputam vaded vaacham: Strain all your speech by the filter of truth.

सत्यं हि परमं बलम् । satyam hi paramam balam: Truth is the greatest power.

सत्यस्य वचनं श्रेयः । satyasya vachanam shreyah: Truth is the best in the long run.

Sources: Srimad Bhagavad Gita; Upanishads; Various lectures by Pujya Swami Dayananda of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam.

Contributed by Dr. Madhu P. Godsay

Some Upcoming Special Mandir Events

Sri Gita Maha Yajna	Saturday, Dec 18
New Year Homa and Bhajans	Saturday, Jan 1
Lohri	Thursday, Jan 13
Makar Sankranti / Pongal	Friday, Jan 14
Vasant Panchami	Tuesday, Feb 8

Mr. Dinesh and Mrs. Bhautika Patel of Middletown, NY 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.

Shradhaanjali श्रद्धाञ्जली

Dr. Dinkar Desai of Monroe left us all for the Heavenly abode on November 6, 2010. The India Temple Foundation and its members, with a sad heart, pray to the Almighty God to grant eternal peace to the departed soul and grant courage to Kalpanaben (his beloved wife) and to Ketu and Ved (his sons) to bear this irreparable loss.

Om Shanti-Shanti-Shantihi.ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः
– India Temple Foundation.

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.

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