

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 begin the third year of publication of Bharatiya Mandir's quarterly newsletter "Dharma Sandesh".

Readers have, thus far, read and appreciated the articles that we have presented in the newsletters. Many devotees, including children, have come forward to contribute articles for different issues. We encourage devotees to read the newsletters and also try to contribute articles.

Summer is in our midst already. We have had a few severe hot days so far, and the heat and humidity are increasing day by day. Children are eagerly awaiting the closing of their schools for the season and parents are making summer camp plans or vacation plans.

As usual, the Bharatiya Mandir will host its annual summer camp for children on August 13 and 14, 2011. This should be an interesting and enlightening experience for all participants.

In August, we will also be celebrating the birth of our Lord Sri Krishna. Just imagine how wonderful and emotional it would be to consider the Supreme Being (परमात्मा) as a small baby and shower Him with our maternal and paternal love and affection. The Lord accepts devotion in all forms – as a parent, as a child, as a sibling, and as a friend.

On August 21 we celebrate Sri Krishna Janmaashtami, and on August 28 we celebrate Nand Mahotsav. We will also be celebrating Sri VaraMahaLakshmi Vratam on Friday, August 12.

In this issue of Dharma Sandesh, we continue with the article on Dashaavatara, the ten primary Avatars

(incarnations) of Lord Vishnu. This issue talks about Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, the seventh and eighth incarnations of the Lord.

Dr. Padma Sundaram continues to write on the "Consorts of Lord MahaVishnu". In this issue, she tells us about Sri Aandaal, a devotee of Lord Vishnu. We have other articles of interest as well.

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
Email: bharatiya_mandir@yahoo.com
Web: www.bharatiyamandir.org

सुभाषिता Subhaashitaa

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

प्रियवाक्यप्रदानेन सर्वे तुष्यन्ति जन्तवः ।
तस्मात् तदेव वक्तव्यं वचने का दरिद्रता ॥

priyavaakya-pradaanena-sarve-tushyanti-jantavah
tasmaat-tadeva-vaktavyam-vacane-kaa-daridrataa

Every creature, including human beings, becomes happy upon hearing nice and kind words. Therefore, one must always speak polite, soft and kind words. What does one lose by speaking nicely? Nothing!!

Everyone gains and becomes pleased when people speak pleasant words. It takes a person no extra effort to be polite and kind, but the impact these nice and kind words have on other people is significant.

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 – “For the bird flying over the deep, blue waters in mid-ocean the only resting place is the mast of a ship sailing in those waters. In the same way, the Lord is the only refuge for the man who is tossed about in the stormy seas of this world. However far the bird may fly, it knows where it can find rest and that knowledge gives it confidence. The Name of the Lord is like that mast; remember it always, associate it with the Form and have that Form fixed in the mind's eye. It is a lamp shedding light in the recesses of your heart. Have the Name on the tongue and it will drive away the inner darkness as well as the outer”. - *Thought for the Day, April 6, 2005.*

Contributed by Dr. Vijaya Dasari

ज्ञानविहार JnanaVihara

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

Dashaavataara – Part III

दशावतार – ३

In the previous two issues of Dharma Sandesh, I presented descriptions of the first six (out of ten) Avatars of Lord Vishnu, namely the Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana and Parashurama Avatars. I continue with the descriptions of the other Avatars here – Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Buddha and Kalki.

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.

7. Sri Rama Avatara – in this Avatara, Lord Vishnu incarnated as Sri Rama (श्रीराम) in Treta Yuga (त्रेतायुग) to vanquish the evil Rakshasa Ravana and to establish Dharma on earth.

Sri Rama was born as the eldest son of Queen Kausalya and King Dasharatha of Ayodhya in the solar lineage (Surya Vamsha सूर्यवंश) of Ikshvaku. He was born on Navami (ninth day) of Shukla Paksha (bright half) of the Hindu month of Chaitra. That day is celebrated all over India (and the world) as Sri Rama Navami.

King Dasharatha performed the Putra Kameshti Yajna (sacrifice to obtain sons). From the blazing sacrificial fire, came a God with Payasa (पायस – nectar or porridge) and gave it to King Dasharatha. The king distributed the Payasa among his three wives Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, who bore him four sons. Lord Vishnu had ordained that He would be born as Sri Rama to vanquish the Rakshasas and establish Dharma on earth. To help Him in this venture, His three brothers were incarnated and born as well. They were Lakshmana (from the great serpent Adi Shesha on whom Lord Vishnu reclines), Bharata (from the Shankha or conch of Lord Vishnu) and Shatrughna (from the Chakra or discus of Lord Vishnu). Bharata was born to Queen Kaikeyi and Lakshmana and Shatrughna were born as twins to Queen Sumitra.



The children grew up in the royal household filled with a mixture of love, happiness and discipline. They were trained by Guru Vasishta in all the Vedas, philosophies, the sciences, religion, arts, politics, and military sciences. They grew up to be experts in all the arts, sciences, and warfare, especially in archery.

Once Sage Vishwamitra arrived at the palace of King Dasharatha and requested the king to send Rama with him in order to vanquish the Rakshasas who were impeding the sacrifices that the Rishis in the forest were performing. King Dasharatha sent Rama and Lakshmana with the sage. In the forest, Rama killed scores of the terrible Rakshasas who were tormenting the pious sages. After that, he revived Ahalya who had been cursed by her husband Sage Gautama to assume the form of a rock.

Later, Sage Vishwamitra took the princes to Mithila, the kingdom of King Janaka. The king was holding a Swayamvara (स्वयंवर) for his foster-daughter Sita, the

incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi. The challenge was to string the bow of Lord Shiva, which only Sri Rama could perform. Sri Rama won the Swayamvara challenge and married Sita.

King Janaka happily performed the marriage of his daughter Sita with Lord Rama. He also gave his other daughters to Lord Rama's brothers and performed their marriages as well. On the way back to Ayodhya from Mithila, Lord Rama encountered Sage Parashurama, the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Parashurama did not recognize the new incarnation and proceeded to insult Sri Rama. Instead, Sri Rama defeated Parashurama and proved his strength by stringing a new bow belonging to Lord Vishnu. The sage accepted defeat and offered all of his powers

from his meditation to Sri Rama as he realized that Sri Rama was the new incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Lord Rama entered Ayodhya with his bride Sita and his family. They stayed there happily for some time.



Meanwhile, King Dasharatha planned to install Sri Rama as the crown prince (Yuvaraja

युवराज). The entire population of the state was happy except for Queen Kaikeyi whose mind was poisoned by her maid Manthara. Queen Kaikeyi devised a plan to stop the coronation of Sri Rama as Yuvaraja.

King Dasharatha had once given Queen Kaikeyi two boons. The queen proceeded to encash those two boons. With the first boon she demanded that her son Bharata be made crown prince in Sri Rama's place, and with the second boon she demanded that Sri Rama be exiled for fourteen years. King Dasharatha was left speechless. He had his hopes and his whole life pinned on Sri Rama but, at the same time, he could not break a promise that he had given to his queen. He pleaded with her not to demand the two boons, but Queen Kaikeyi was adamant.

Lord Rama was informed of this incident and he immediately set off for the forest without a moment's hesitation. Sita and Lakshmana followed him everywhere he went. Heartbroken and unable to bear the separation from his son, King Dasharatha breathed his last with Queen Kausalya by his side.

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Once Bharata came to know of these events, he rushed home from his uncle's kingdom where he was visiting at the time these events took place. He was mortified to find out that his mother had been the sole cause for the misfortune that had befallen them. After he performed the last rites for his father, he rushed to the forest where Sri Rama was staying and implored Sri Rama to return to Ayodhya and accept his rightful place as king. Sri Rama flatly refused Bharata's request stating that he must fulfill the promise given to his father and he must obey his father at all costs.

Sri Rama, accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, spent several years in the forest visiting with sages and vanquishing Rakshasas who were troubling the sages. In the fourteenth year of exile, Sita was kidnapped by the Rakshasa king Ravana. He took her to Lanka and kept her in the Ashoka Vana garden. Sri Rama went searching for his wife, and in the process vanquished several Rakshasas. He also made new friends in Sugreeva, king of the monkeys and got a new prime devotee in Hanuman.



When ordered by Sugreeva to go and look for Sita, Hanuman crossed the sea at Rameshwaram and found Sita Devi. Sri Rama led the monkey and bear armies into Lanka and defeated and killed the evil Ravana, Kumbhakarna and the Rakshasas who were

responsible for troubling and killing pious people and who were responsible for impeding Dharma. He then installed Ravana's brother Vibheeshana as the king of Lanka. Vibheeshana, in spite of being a Rakshasa, was a good and pious man and a devotee of Sri Rama.

After the war was complete, Sri Rama ordered that Sita Devi be brought to his presence. When Sita arrived, Sri Rama disowned her stating that since she had been in Ravana's household, she no longer was his wife and he had fought the war only to uphold and protect Dharma. Sita requested Lakshmana to prepare a pyre into which she jumped stating that if she was pure and chaste, the fire would not harm even a hair on her body. When she jumped into the fire, Lord Agni appeared with Sita and proved to Lord Rama and the world that Sita was indeed pure and chaste. Sita thus passed the fire test अग्नि परीक्षा. Rama then happily accepted Sita and they returned to Ayodhya.

Upon his return, Rama was crowned king of Ayodhya. He ruled for several thousand years. But he had to banish a pregnant Sita to the forest in response to some persons speaking ill of her and casting doubts on her chastity. Staying in the forest at the hermitage of Sage Valmiki, Sita bore twin sons Lava and Kusha. Once, Sri Rama performed the Ashvamedha Yajna. As part of the process, the sacrificial horse was let loose to run across kingdoms. Lava and Kusha tied up the horse and thus challenged Lord Rama to war.

When Rama came with his forces to vanquish the perpetrators, he was defeated. Sage Valmiki then revealed to Rama the fact that Lava and Kusha were his children. Lord Rama was overjoyed, but then Sita, who did not want to go back to Rama, prayed to Mother Earth to come and take her. The earth opened up and Bhumi Devi (Mother Earth) appeared and took Sita away as everyone present there watched in awe.

Sri Rama is called Maryada Purushottama – the Perfect Man, the Lord of Virtue, the Ideal Man. He is not Purushottama just because He is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Sri Rama personified perfection and all the characteristics an ideal person would aspire for. Sri Rama fulfilled all his obligations and never crossed the line of Dharma (Maryada - मर्यादा).

8. Sri Krishna Avatara – in this Avatara, Lord Vishnu incarnated as Sri Krishna (श्रीकृष्ण) towards the end of Dwapara Yuga (द्वैपर युग) to vanquish evildoers and establish Dharma on earth.

Of the ten avatars, Sri Narasimha, Sri Rama and Sri Krishna are considered to be Purna Avatars (पूर्ण अवतार - Complete Manifestation), while the other avatars are Amsharoota (अंशरूप - partial) avatars. While Sri Rama never declared his divinity throughout his incarnation, Sri Krishna declared his divinity several times. He even displayed his Vishwaroota (विश्वरूप - Universal Form) to Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

Sri Krishna is known by several names, such as Vaasudeva (वासुदेव), Keshava (केशव), Gopala (गोपाल), Govinda (गोविन्द), Mukunda (मुकुन्द), Sri Hari (श्रीहरि), Jagannatha (जगन्नाथ) and Madhusudana (मधुसूदन). The Sri Vishnu Sahasranaama (श्री विष्णु सहस्रनाम) lists all

the thousand names of Lord Vishnu, including Sri Krishna (57th name).



Sri Krishna was born into the Vrishni clan of the Yadavas of Mathura. He was born as the eighth son of Vasudeva and Devaki in Mathura. He was born at midnight on the

eighth day (अष्टमी) in the second half of the month of Shravana (श्रावण कृष्ण पक्ष) under the star of Rohini (रोहिणी). At the time of his birth, His parents were prisoners of the evil king Kamsa, Devaki's brother. Kamsa had usurped the royal throne by imprisoning his father King Ugrasena. On the wedding day of his sister Devaki, Kamsa heard a prophecy (आकाशवाणी) that Devaki's eighth son would kill him. On hearing that, Kamsa put Vasudeva and Devaki under house arrest. He killed the first six children that were born to the couple. The seventh child appeared to be a miscarriage when, in fact, the fetus was transferred from Devaki's womb to the womb of Rohini, the first wife of Vasudeva. That child was born as Balarama (बलराम), who was the incarnation of Adi Shesha (and was born as Lakshmana earlier). Vasudeva and Rohini had a daughter Subhadra (सुभद्रा), who was born much later than Balarama and Krishna. In the Jagannatha Temple at Puri, Subhadra and Balarama are also worshipped along with Sri Krishna (as Jagannatha).

When Krishna was born, Vasudeva feared for his safety. He decided to take him across the river Yamuna to his friend Nanda's house in Gokula. The moment he thought so, his shackles were cut, the prison guards fell unconscious, and the prison doors opened. Vasudeva immediately put baby Krishna in a basket and set off on foot to Gokula. The Yamuna abated, and AdiShesha, the great serpent, himself came to protect the Lord from the pouring rain. After giving Krishna to Nanda, Vasudeva brought back a girl who had just been born to Nanda's wife Yashoda. That girl was the Goddess Durga. Once Vasudeva returned to the prison, his shackles came up, the prison doors locked, and the guards woke up. On hearing the news of a child's birth, Kamsa hurried to the prison. He was surprised that the child was a girl. Nevertheless, he attempted to kill the baby, but it escaped his clutches and flew into the sky. Durga then

announced to Kamsa that his killer had already been born and that he could not change his destiny.



Krishna grew up in Gokula under the loving care of Nanda and Yashoda. There are several stories in the Puranas about Krishna's childhood pranks with his mother Yashoda. There are also several stories about his youthful activities in the nearby forest of Vrindavan (वृन्दावन) with the gopis,

especially with Radha, the daughter of Vrishabhanu.

The Rasa Lilas (रसलीला) of Krishna and Radha has been the centerpiece of the Krishna Bhakti traditions. Radha is Krishna's Hlaadini Shakti (ह्लादिनी शक्ति) – the power of the Lord that brings joy to all.

During his childhood and youth, Krishna also vanquished several demons, including Pootana (पूतना) and Kaliya (कालीय), the snake. He destroyed the arrogance of Lord Indra by lifting the entire Govardhana hill with his little finger and protecting all the people of the village from the torrential rains.

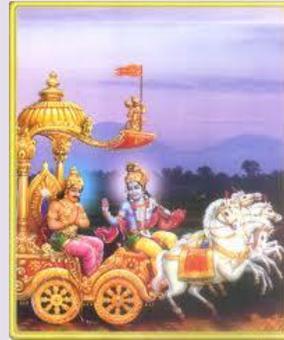
When he was thirteen years old, Krishna returned to Dwaraka at the invitation of his uncle Kamsa, who came to know that Krishna was alive in Gokula. Kamsa had secret plans to kill Krishna upon his arrival in Mathura. He set up the wrestlers Mushtika and Chanura to kill Balarama and Krishna. During the fight, Krishna killed the wrestlers, and later he killed Kamsa as well. He reinstated King Ugrasena on the throne of Mathura.

Krishna became an important prince in the court of Mathura. He married Rukmini (रुक्मिणी), the daughter of King Bhisma of Vidarbha, after abducting her from the royal palace upon her request. He had a total of eight chief queens (Ashta Bharya अष्टभार्या) – Rukmini, Satyabhama, Jambavati, Nagnajiti, Kalindi, Mitravrinda, Bhadra and Lakshana. In addition, he rescued 16,100 maidens who were being held captive by the demon Narakasura. Since the women were degraded for being captive by Narakasura, Krishna, marrying them, rehabilitated the women and gave them a respectful status in society.

Meanwhile, Sri Krishna became friends with Arjuna and the other Pandava princes of Hastinapura. They were his cousins as Krishna's father Vasudeva was the brother of Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas.

Jarasandha, the father-in-law of Kamsa, attacked Mathura seventeen times to avenge the death of Kamsa. Each time the attack cost thousands of soldiers their lives. The prosperity of the city also started to dwindle. So, in order to protect his people from destruction and the other travails of war, Krishna relocated his city to Dwaraka (द्वारका) in the middle of the ocean where it was safe and where Jarasandha could not attack any more. Krishna thus brought peace and prosperity to his people.

When Yudhistira became emperor of Indraprastha, he performed the Rajasuya Yajna (राजसूय यज्ञ). During the Yajna, he and the other venerate people unanimously decided to worship Sri Krishna with the first honors. But Krishna's cousin Shishupala began to berate Krishna in front of everyone. Krishna quietly stood and forgave one hundred verbal abuses by Shishupala since he had promised that to Shishupala's



mother. But upon the next abuse, Krishna displayed his Virat Roopa (विराट रूप) and cut off Shishupala's head with his Sudarshana Chakra. Shishupala and Dantavakra were Jaya and Vijaya, the cursed doormen of the Lord's abode Vaikunta.

When the war of Kurukshetra between the Pandavas and the Kauravas became inevitable, Krishna went to Hastinapura as a diplomat in one last effort to negotiate peace. But his efforts failed because of the arrogant Duryodhana. The war started. Krishna served in the war as Arjuna's charioteer (सारथी).

On the first day of the war, when Arjuna became despondent and decided to abandon the war, Krishna advised him on the path of Dharma, duty, knowledge and renunciation. This conversation between Lord Krishna and his devotee Arjuna is compiled in the holy Sri Bhagavad Gita (श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता). During this conversation, Sri Krishna displayed his Vishwa Roopa (विश्वरूप - Universal Form) showing Arjuna his glory

and divinity. Throughout the 18-day war, Sri Krishna guided Arjuna through the chaotic and troublesome journey of the war. He encouraged and motivated Arjuna every step of the way.

The war ended with Dharma winning over Adharma, as was the Lord's intent. Towards the end of the war, Krishna brought back to life Arjuna's grandson and



Abhimanyu's son Parikshit after he was struck by the Brahmastra by Ashwatthama while still in his mother's womb. Parikshit became the Pandavas' successor to the throne of Hastinapura.

After installing Yudhisthira on the throne of Hastinapura, Krishna returned to Dwaraka.

While Sri Rama was the Perfect Human, Sri Krishna was the Super Human. He displayed his divinity in addition to his human characteristics. He taught Arjuna and the whole world the path of Dharma and how to live while abiding by Dharma.

All Vaishnava traditions recognize Krishna as an avatar of Vishnu; others identify Krishna with Vishnu; while traditions, such as Gaudiya Vaishnavism, Vallabha Sampradaya and the Nimbarka Sampradaya, regard Krishna as the Swayam Bhagavan (स्वयं भगवान्), the original form of God, or the Lord himself. Swaminarayan, the founder of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, also worshipped Krishna as God himself. "Greater Krishnaism" corresponds to the second and dominant phase of Vaishnavism, revolving around the cults of the Vaasudeva, Krishna, and Gopala of the late Vedic period. Today the faith has a significant following outside of India as well.

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 5

SRI AANDAAL (श्री आण्डाळ्)

In the current and next issues, I will talk about two women who showed the world that Divine Love and Devotion can take one to the Lotus Feet of the Lord. One is Andal and the other is Meera Bai. In this issue, I will talk about Sri Aandaal.

Aandaal was an 8th century poet and is one of the twelve Alvars (saints) in Vaishnavism. She is the only woman Alvar in Vaishnavism. There is a small village in Tamil Nadu by name Srivilliputtur. There lived a man named Vishnucitta. He was also called as Periyalvar. He used to make garlands for the Lord daily and take them to the temple. One day he found a baby girl under a Tulasi (तुलसी) plant. He was overjoyed and raised her as his daughter. As she grew up he used to teach her about Lord Krishna. She was named Goda (गोदा in Sanskrit) or Kodhai (in Tamil) meaning "Gift of the Earth".

Goda was brought up in an atmosphere of love and devotion to the Lord and she fantasized about being the lover and devotee of Lord Krishna. At the tender age of 8 or 10, she started writing poetry about Lord Krishna imagining herself to be a cowherd. There are 30 verses in this work called Thiruppavai.



When she attained the age of 15, her father wanted her to marry a nice young man and lead a normal life like all the girls. Goda was so much in love with the Lord that she insisted that she would marry only Lord Ranganatha (श्री रङ्गनाथ) of Sri Ranganam (श्रीरङ्गम्). Goda used to make

the garlands for the Lord with her father. Once the garland was done she would wear it herself to check if it would look nice for the Lord. Only if it looked good would she send it to the temple. Her father did not know about this. But one day he saw a strand of Goda's hair entangled in the garland. He became livid with anger. In Hinduism one does not offer anything already used by human beings to God. He admonished Goda. He discarded that garland and

made a new one for the Lord. That night Vishnucitta had a dream in which Lord Ranganatha asked him why he did not bring Him the garland worn by Goda. The Lord also told him that He missed the fragrance of Goda in the garland and He would accept only those garlands that were worn by Goda.



The next morning Vishnucitta was overjoyed about his dream and Goda became even more devoted to the Lord. She also wrote poems fantasizing about being the wife of the Lord. These set of poems are called Nacciyar Tirumoli (Sayings of the Goddess). Again the Lord came in Vishnucitta's dream and asked him to bring Goda dressed as a bride to the temple. The Lord also came in

the dream of the priest at the temple and told him to conduct the marriage of Goda with Him. The wedding was conducted and Goda was ecstatic and she merged with Lord Ranganatha Swamy. She was only 15 years old at that time.

In South India Andal is believed to be an incarnation of Bhumi Devi (भूमिदेवी – Mother Earth) and is always seen sitting at the Lotus Feet of Lord Vishnu. She is also known as "Chudikodutha Sudarkodi," which means "A Bright creeper-like woman who gave her garlands to the Lord after wearing them". Aandaal means "One who Rules the Lord".

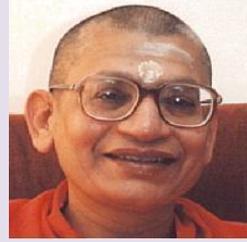
Her poetry is still sung at the temples and in houses during the winter months of December and January. In Vaishnava temples, priests always sing verses from Thiruppavai at the conclusion of the Puja to Lord Vishnu.

Sources: Andal Biography, Life of Andal – www.ramanuja.org, and Wikipedia
Contributed by Dr. Padma Sundaram.

Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati's visit to Bharatiya Mandir

Swami Ji visited Bharatiya Mandir on Saturday, May 14, 2011. The main topic of his talk was **Stress Management** based on Bhagavad Gita. His presentation was phenomenal. Swami Ji said that all Dharma Sandesh

human beings are born with a certain number of characteristics. Mind is humanity's greatest asset. If we can control our mind through spiritual means, stresses of all kinds are manageable. The human body is a miraculous creation. If we love ourselves as we are, and treat others as we would like to be treated, the stress related issues can be resolved. This is how I understood it from the talk.



Relationships at home, at work, and in society in general and specific issues were addressed. This was followed by a question-and-answer session. Specific questions were answered in a very down-to-

earth, practical manner. Everyone present could relate to them. Everyone benefited from the presentation according to the attendees' response, which numbered more than fifty (50). Devotees expressed interest in more events like this; so, hopefully, next year we may be lucky to have Swami Ji come again to the Mandir.

Contributed by Mrs. Raj Arora

My Trip to India *by Rick Phillips*

Since I was a child I was drawn to India. In university I studied meditation with Shri Chinmoy. During Diwali 2010, I was in India. I brought the great Mahabharata. It was good reading about places I was visiting.

While in India I saw both good and bad. I did not like driving on the wrong side of the road, assigned train seats, unfiltered tap water, beggars or having to close my eyes and pray while traveling in Delhi's taxis. On the other hand, I liked the hundreds of inspiring temples and the warm welcome from the people there. I enjoyed the Indian people dressed in the garb of the Royal Family of God, as princes & princesses. I enjoyed the great music, meeting the late Ravi Shankar's son in a Sitar Shop, the great veggie food and the smell of incense in the air which all led to the overall "higher vibration".

In Amritsar I saw the peaceful Golden Temple (and had the best Samosas in India). It was when President Obama was planning to go, before he found out that they couldn't agree on what kind of hat would keep God and everybody happy.

In Vrindavan I had the absolute best Krishna Lassi in the world. I also saw a noble Brahma Bull approaching slowly and gave the camera to the closest person, knowing they are generally tame except when breeding or being ridden. I approached the noble Bull and began to pet its nose. I turned back to get my picture, but saw my photographer crouching on a porch - away from any possible reach. I did not get a picture of me and the Brahma Bull, but I got a fun story that makes me laugh when I remember it.

In Ayodhya, the birthplace of the great Lord Rama, I saw the remains of His temple and learned of the tragic riots when it was disassembled. I saw the inspiring Birla Ram Temple and mediated there. I perceived great Shakti, and it was difficult to turn away from meditation when (I thought) I was finished – as happens in temples occasionally.

At Haridwar I swam in the Ganges. Later, walking the "Stairway to Heaven", I bought Om ring boxes and coconuts. On my way down, I was mugged by a tall, smart, determined monkey, who would not let me take my coconut out. Dr. Rama Shankar said to me "you cannot take anything from the temple," as if I should have known. Three steps later another monkey ran up and took his bag with his candy and my Om ring holders - the monkey crouched out of our reach, it took the Om ring holders and threw them. But Dr. Shankar never got his candy. In Rishikesh they were quite smart too. Who trained the monkeys so well?

There were "lessons learned" such as the meaning behind rituals and Sanskrit Mantras. I learned much and I know I need to return, especially to the Brahma Temple to ask to be freed up from this human cycle of incarnations. I understood why Chinmoy encouraged frequently meditating on Mantra Yoga. I had been drawn toward "discriminative intelligence" to achieve spiritual liberation – "Jnana Yoga". But now I can retire back to Chinmoy's Mantra approach. I have also learned "dramatic world changes" are near and that it will be harder to find perfect oneness with God.

Although we can have many lifetimes to move toward perfection, when changes occur, it will be harder "for generations to come" to be one with God. There are spiritual exercises that we all need to apply now; soon it will be difficult. Keep the faith and move forward!

Special Puja

Like every year, Sunday, July 3, 2011 is dedicated to the **2011 Graduates of our Community**. On that day all the new graduates (from High School, College and professionals) will perform Puja and Vedic Havan at the Mandir. Community members are invited to join us to congratulate the new graduates and bless them for a bright future. The Puja will start at 10 am and will be followed by Vedic Havan, Arati and Prasad. Please call Pundit Ji at 361-3055 or Dipti Patel at 294-8729 or Ashok Bhagirath at 224-3301 if you plan to join this Puja. **A Puja Thali will be reserved for you.** Please pass the word around.

General Body Meeting

Immediately following the Bhajans, on Sunday, July 3, 2011, there will be a General Body Meeting of the India Temple Foundation, Inc. The Annual Report of Activities of the foundation and its financial statement will be presented for approval. Election will be held for three vacancies on the Board of Directors (for 3-year term). Only members in good standing are eligible to vote.

Some Upcoming Special Mandir Events

Special Puja for 2011 Graduates	Sunday, July 3
General Body Meeting	Sunday, July 3
Sri Bhagwati Jagran	Saturday, July 9
Sri Guru Purnima	Friday, July 15
Sri VaraMahaLakshmi Vratam	Friday, Aug 12
Sri Krishna Janmaashtami	Sunday, Aug 21
Sri Nand Mahotsav	Sunday, Aug 28

Mr. Milan and Mrs. Chitra Chauhan of Washingtonville, 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.

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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