

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 pleased to bring you another issue of Dharma Sandesh.

Winter is amidst us already. The cold winds and the barren trees signal to us that the calendar year is winding down and a New Year is waiting to make its advent among us.

As the new calendar year begins for all, we will be worshipping Lord Ganapati, the remover of obstacles and the grantor of knowledge and wisdom, so that the New Year will be trouble-free and obstacle-free in our different pursuits.

The harvest festival of Lohri, Sankranti / Pongal will be celebrated in January as well as Uttarayan Punya Kala (उत्तरायण पुण्य काल). Sri Bhagavad Gita Maha Yajna (श्री भगवद्गीता महायज्ञ) will be conducted on January 20 with the reading of all 700 shlokas of the Gita. We will be worshipping Mata Saraswati on Basant (Vasant) Panchami (वसंतपञ्चमी) in February.

In this issue, I present a brief story of Shani Deva (शनिदेव), the most dreaded and, in many cases, the most misunderstood, graha of all. I also include the story of King Vikramaditya of Ujjain as part of Shani Mahatmya (श्री शनिमाहात्म्य the greatness of Shani).

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

सुभाषिता Subhaashitaa

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

दानं भोगो नाशस्तिस्रो गतयो भवन्ति वित्तस्य ।
यो न ददाति न भुङ्क्ते तस्य तृतीया गतिर्भवति ॥

daanam-bhogo-naashas-tisro-gatayo-bhavanti-vittasya |
yo-na-dadaati-na-bhunkte-tasya-tritiya-gatir-bhavati ||

Charity, indulgence and destructions are three destiny paths for wealth to take. For a person who does not give to charity nor enjoy his/her wealth, the third path is the fated path.

Hoarding wealth without helping oneself or others does not befit a human being. When a person earns money, he/she has to donate some to charity and keep some of it to live comfortably and enjoy life. If the person does neither, then that money is of no use to that person as well as others. It is the same as if it were destroyed.

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 – "Illness is caused more by malnutrition of the mind than of the body. As doctors speak of vitamin deficiency, I will present the root-cause in similar lines as 'Deficiency of Vitamin G'. To cure this, I will recommend the repetition of any name of God, along with contemplation of His Glory and the Grace of God. That is the medicine to overcome the Vitamin G deficiency. Regulated life and habits are two-thirds of the treatment while medicine contributes to one-third. Every one of you

must reveal the qualities of love, humility, detachment and contentment through all your actions. When your mind is unattached to the ups and downs of life, but is able to maintain equanimity under all circumstances, your physical health will be excellent.”

- *Divine Discourse, Sep 27 1965.*

Contributed by Dr. Vijaya Dasari

ज्ञानविहार JnanaVihara

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

Lord Shani (Saturn) श्री शनि देव

Shani (शनि) is one of the Navagrahas (नवग्रह – Nine Cosmic Energies) influencing the lives and actions of human beings. Shani represents the planet Saturn in our solar system. He is the only graha to have the epithet Ishvara. He is known as Shanishwara (शनीश्वर). Saturday (शनिवार) is known as the day of Shani.

The term Shani comes from the phrase - शनये क्रमति सः शनिः - shanaye kramati sah Shanih – Shani is the one who moves slowly. Shani (Saturn) takes the equivalent of 30 earth years to complete one revolution around the Sun. Hence, he is also referred to as Shanaishchara (शनैश्चर slow-moving).

As Shani traverses the universe in 30 earth years making his journey around the Sun, he has to go through the 12 zodiacs (rashis राशि). He spends two and a half (2 ½) years in each zodiac. It is strongly believed that Shani influences human beings whenever he is in the zodiac associated with the birth moon sign of the human being, as well as the zodiacs that come before and after the birth zodiac. For example, if the birth zodiac of a person is Taurus (वृषभ Vrishabha), the effects of Shani start when he enters the zodiac Aries (मेष Mesha) and the effects alleviate when he leaves the zodiac Gemini (मिथुन Mithuna). That means that the human is subject to Shani's effects for 7 ½ years (2 ½ x 3 = 7 ½). This period is generally referred to as “sade saathi” - साढेसाती – the 7 ½ year-period ‘of trouble.’

Shani also displays his malefic attributes on humans



when he is transiting the 1st, 4th, 8th, and 10th zodiacs from the birth zodiac of a human being. These stages are known as Kantaka-Shani (कण्टकशनि), and the 8th Shani is known more specifically as Ashtama-Shani (अष्टमशनि). All these periods (2 ½ years each) are

troublesome for humans, although not as much as the “sade saathi” period.

Shani generally being a malefic graha, many people think of him as fearsome, cruel and inconsiderate. But Shani is not just cruel and punishing to humans. He is known to be the greatest teacher and well-wisher for the righteous as well the greatest punisher for those who follow the path of evil, backstabbing, lies, betrayal, and unjust revenge. According to Hindu scriptures, a favorable Shani bestows wealth and fame, but, at the same time, an unfavorable Shani gives endless miseries. A favorable Shani bestows sharp memory, and makes people wealthy and famous. It is said that for some people, there is a satisfactory profit in business. During the unfavorable period of Shani, one has to face lots of miseries and suffering. Chances exist for loss of property, wealth, and health. If people have done wrong deeds, then they can also face humiliation in public life.

Lord Shani punishes only those who perform wrong deeds. He is favorable to people performing good deeds in life and rewards them with lots of progress in their life. He may also elevate them to high positions in life. Lord Shani impartially delivers the result of peoples' deeds (karma) without any favor or animosity.

Shani is the son of Surya (सूर्य the Sun God) and the elder brother of Yama (यम), the Lord of Death. Although by birth, Shani is the younger brother of Yama, he obtained a boon that elevated him to the status of the elder and more powerful one (यमाग्रज). It is said that Surya's two sons Shani and Yama judge all

human beings impartially. They are Nyaya Devatas (न्यायदेवता). As mentioned before, Lord Shani gives one the results of one's deeds throughout one's life through appropriate punishments and rewards; on the other hand, Lord Yama grants the results of one's deeds after death.



Shani is depicted as dark-blue, almost black, in color. He is generally clothed in all black. He holds a sword, bow and arrows, and two daggers, and has a Varada

Mudra (वरदमुद्रा boon-giving). He is mounted on a crow, which is his vahana (वाहन - vehicle). He faces westward. He presides over the Makara (मकर Capricorn) and Kumbha (कुम्भ Aquarius) rashis (zodiacs). His gem is blue sapphire and he likes all black stones. His metal is iron and steel. His favorite items are oil, coal, iron and steel, black sesame seeds (तिल), and urad dal (lentils).

Story of Shani: Lord Surya (सूर्य) was married to Sanjna (संज्ञा), also known as Sanjana (सञ्जना), the daughter of Vishwakarma (विश्वकर्म), the architect of the Gods. The couple had three children – Vaivasvata Manu (the Manu of the 7th and current Manvantara), Yama (the Lord of Death) and Yamuna (the river).

Sanjna could not tolerate the brightness, power, and heat of Surya. Day by day, she became weak. One day, desperate to get away from Surya, she created Chaya (छाया), her shadow, into her own form. Entrusting the welfare of her husband and children to Chaya, she left her husband's home and went to her father's home. There, her father, Vishwakarma, refused shelter for her saying that she should rightfully be with her husband. Disappointed, Sanjna went to BhuLoka and assumed the form of a mare. She started doing severe penance in order to get enough power and luster so that she could tolerate Surya's power and luster.

Meanwhile, Chaya served Surya as his wife. Surya did not realize that Chaya was not his wife Sanjna. The couple had three more children – Savarni Manu (the

Manu of the 8th and future Manvantara), Shani Deva, and Tapti (the river).

Once her children were born, Chaya began to discriminate between her children and Sanjna's children. She mistreated Sanjna's children, and this was not acceptable to the young boy Yama. He began to slowly realize that Chaya was not his own mother, although she looked exactly like her. He complained to his father, but Surya did not believe him.

Days passed. One day, Chaya abused Yama, and Yama, in anger, raised his legs as if to kick Chaya. Seething in anger, Chaya cursed Yama stating that his legs would fall off his body. The young Yama got frightened and ran to his father. In tears, he told him what had transpired and how he was cursed. Surya consoled Yama and reduced the effect of the curse. He said, "Worms will eat some of the flesh of your legs and then the worms will fall on the earth. You will not lose your limbs permanently."

Surya then became suspicious of Chaya. After all, no mother would curse her own child even if the child misbehaved. Surya questioned Chaya about herself. When he threatened to curse her, Chaya revealed the entire story of her birth from Sanjna's shadow. Surya abandoned Chaya and her children immediately, and went to Vishwakarma in search of his wife.

Vishwakarma told Surya that Sanjna was not at his home, but that she was performing penance on earth in the form of a mare. Surya asked Vishwakarma to cut off a portion of his brightness. Vishwakarma, being the architect of the Gods, did the same and, from that power, created Sudarshana (सुदर्शन), the Chakra for Lord Vishnu, the Trishula for Lord Shiva, the spear for Lord Subramanya, the Pushpaka Vimana for Lord Kubera, and other divine objects.

Surya, with his reduced luster, went down to earth looking for Sanjna. He found her in the form of a mare. Assuming the form of a horse, Surya mated with Sanjna. The union produced the twin Ashwini Kumaras (अश्विनिकुमार), the divine physicians of the Gods (Ashwini = born of the Ashwa (horse)). Surya brought Sanjna home and they lived happily.

Meanwhile, Shani was very angry at how his father Surya mistreated and abandoned his mother Chaya.

He performed severe penance and appeased Lord Shiva. In addition to several powerful boons, he also obtained the status of a graha (planet). He also asked to be considered the elder brother of Yama (यमराज) and the more powerful one. However, his anger for his father Surya Deva did not subside; thus, he remains Surya's enemy forever.

Shani's Effects: As mentioned earlier, Shani is the most dreaded graha of all. He affects everyone in all the realms, including human beings, Devas, Asuras,



Rakshasas, and Gandharvas. Even the God of Gods, Lord Shiva, was not exempt from Shani's troublesome influences. Surya Deva,

Shani's father, was not exempt either. Other divine beings affected by Shani include Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, Guru Brihaspati, Sage Vasishta, Lord Indra, and the Pandavas. Rakshasas like Ravana and his son Indrajit were not spared either.

Famous humans affected by Lord Shani include King Harischandra, King Nala and King Vikramaditya. The most famous of all the stories of human beings affected by Shani is that of King Vikramaditya of Ujjain. His story (Shani Mahatmya) goes as follows:

A long time ago, King Vikramaditya ruled the city of Ujjain. He was a righteous intellectual philanthropist and a great king. He treated his citizens like they were his children and they, in turn, regarded him as their own father. One day there were many learned and wise pundits assembled in his court. So the King decided to commence a discussion about which graha was superior among the nine grahas. All the wise pundits came forward to take part in the discussion by telling the audience about their favorite graha. Each wise man spoke about the greatness and the immense powers of the graha he had chosen, starting with Surya, the Sun God. The pundit describing Shani said, "Shani Deva, Saturn, is the greatest graha of all and has the most amazing strength. He is the cause of all pains but he can also give great happiness. When he gets angry he will give a person many problems. He gets angry very quickly and he is capable of causing

the complete ruin of an individual. This is why many people worship him for his blessings. His appearance is that of an oilman. He is black in complexion. He is lame but he is handsome. He remains undefeated in any battle whether it is with Gods or rakshasas. He can crush anybody merely with his looks.

When Shani was born he looked at his father Surya, who was with his charioteer and horses. As soon as he looked at them, Surya got inflicted with a terrible skin disease, the charioteer turned lame, and the horses became blind. Every remedy was tried, but to no avail. When Shani glanced at them again, everyone, including Lord Surya, became normal and healthy."

When King Vikramaditya heard this, he laughed loudly and said, 'It is useless to give birth to this kind of a son. This son is just like an enemy. Oh wise men, let me know, if this kind of son causes so much damage right after birth, how much more damage might he do later on!'

At that time, Lord Shani was flying in the vicinity on his chariot. Upon hearing the king's comments he descended from his chariot and entered the King's court. King Vikramaditya immediately stood up and bowed down at Shani's feet, but Shani pushed him aside and said, 'You are an arrogant King. You are amazingly good in sarcasm. So now I will show you my amazing powers and the results of your bad luck.'

King Vikramaditya begged for mercy and asked for forgiveness, but Shani refused and swiftly flew away. Despondent, the King told the wise men that he was ashamed of himself for making fun of Lord Shani. The wise men suggested some remedies to alleviate the suffering that was imminent. But deep inside, King Vikramaditya knew what he did was wrong.

One month passed. Lord Shani moved to the twelfth house (the one before the birth zodiac) in King Vikramaditya's horoscope. The pundits advised the King to worship Shani, as Shani would rule over his horoscope for the next 7 ½ years. Since the King had made fun of Shani, Shani would definitely trouble him. But the King said, 'Shani Deva will not be pleased with me in spite of what I do. So let it be! I will face whatever comes forth for me.'

A few days later, sometime in the afternoon, Shani came to Ujjain disguised as a horse trader. King

Vikramaditya also came and inquired about the prices of the different horses. Shani showed him a horse and said, 'Try this horse and you will know what the real worth of this horse is.'

King Vikramaditya mounted the horse and used his whip to make the horse run faster. The horse began to run at the speed of wind. The king tried to calm down the horse, but the horse started to run faster and faster as if it was flying. Soon, the horse took the king far away into a forest. When the horse finally stopped, the king stepped down to examine his surroundings.

Immediately the horse disappeared, and the forest also disappeared. King Vikramaditya was surprised, but he was more focused on finding his way back. Night began to fall and the king could no longer see the path in front of him. So he slept on the ground. When the Sun rose in the morning he began walking. He walked about eight miles towards a city called Tamalinda.

Meanwhile, in Ujjain, all the citizens eagerly waited for the King to return. After a while, Shani, disguised as the horse trader, asked the Prime Minister either to pay the price of the horse or return the horse. So, the Prime Minister paid the full price of the horse. Then Shani left the spot. The Prime Minister started a detailed search for the king.

As King Vikramaditya entered the city of Tamalinda, he met a very rich merchant named Shripati. Seeing the King, the merchant invited him home. After the King had taken a bath and freshened up, the merchant inquired about him. The King replied that he was a Kshatriya and had come from afar and was in transit. The merchant ordered a nice dinner for Vikramaditya. During dinner he asked King Vikramaditya to stay the night and leave in the morning.

After dinner, the merchant asked for more personal details from the King. The merchant had a daughter named Alolika. The girl was of marriageable age, but the merchant had been unable to find a suitable groom for her. Now that he saw King Vikramaditya, the merchant decided that he was the most suitable match for Alolika. He went to Alolika and, in excitement, told her 'I have found a very good match for you. Please marry him without any hesitation.'

Alolika said, 'Father, let me talk to him and then I can judge whether this Kshatriya is a good match for me.' She asked her father to send the Kshatriya to the guest

room, which was also a painter's studio. The merchant went back to Vikramaditya and told him that the studio was available if he wanted to sleep. Not wanting to offend his host, King Vikramaditya went to the guest room. There, he saw several beautiful and life-like paintings of birds and animals. The paintings were so realistic that one could feel that the birds and animals were alive. Vikramaditya lay down on the bed, which was decorated with jewels, beautiful colors and flowers. He also noticed that there were many lamps in every corner. He was astonished and marveled about the customs of the place. But his mind was still uneasy and he could not sleep.

After some time, Alolika entered the studio carrying lamps and flowers for the king. She was wearing beautiful clothes, jewelry, and aromatic perfume. She also wore anklets, which were making a very pleasant sound. Looking like a beautiful statue, she stood in front of Vikramaditya who was pretending to be asleep. When he did not wake up, Alolika sprinkled some water from a sandalwood jug on him. Still Vikramaditya did not wake up. Alolika tried several tactics to wake him but to no avail. Eventually, she got tired. She took off her pearl necklace and hung it on a hook on a nearby wall. She lay down on the bed next to the king and fell asleep.

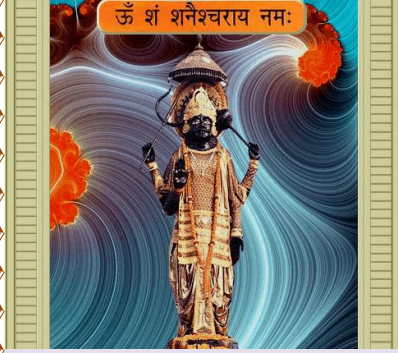
Then Vikramaditya woke up and started to think, 'who is this girl? Why is she sleeping next to me?' He looked around and again saw the paintings. Suddenly, as if by miracle, a swan from one of the paintings came to life. It flew towards Alolika's pearl necklace and grabbed it in its mouth. The king was astonished to see this. He thought that it would be wrong to snatch the pearl necklace from the swan's mouth as it would hurt the swan and it would be against his principle of not hurting any living creature. So he watched as the swan swallowed the entire necklace. Then suddenly, a deep sleep came over him.

The next morning Alolika woke up and thought to herself, 'this person is the greatest fool of all. All night I was sleeping next to him and he never awoke. Clearly this Kshatriya has no manhood.' She felt angry and insulted that Vikramaditya was not attracted to her. So, she started to leave the room and looked for her necklace on the hook. The necklace was missing. She woke Vikramaditya up and accused him of stealing the necklace. She ordered him to return the necklace and leave the house immediately.

She also threatened to tell all the villagers what had happened and told Vikramaditya that he would face public humiliation and shame for his theft.

King Vikramaditya said that he did not take the necklace, and said that he was being falsely accused. Alolika became very angry and immediately told her father that the 'perfect groom' was a mere thief who stole her necklace. Then she told her father to get the necklace from the guest and send him on his way.

Then Shripati said to Vikramaditya, 'I gave you a nice place to rest, gave you a good dinner, and on top of that I was about to offer you my daughter's hand in marriage. But you stole her necklace!! How foolish of you! Is this the way you return my favors? Return the necklace immediately and go away from here.'



Vikramaditya told the merchant that he did not take the necklace. He explained what had happened and said that, as a result of his fate, he was in trouble. Hearing this,

Shripati got very angry and he ordered his servants to tie Vikramaditya up and continue to beat him until the necklace was returned.

The servants did as ordered and beat the king mercilessly. After receiving several beatings, the king said to the merchant, 'I do not have the necklace. You are beating me unnecessarily.'

Shripati thought that this man was a real seasoned thief and that he would not give up the necklace that easily. So he went to the court of King Chandrasena of Tamalinda and told him everything. After hearing Shripati's complaint, King Chandrasena ordered Vikramaditya to be brought to the royal court for questioning. Vikramaditya was brought in front of King Chandrasena, who was actually a subordinate king of King Vikramaditya. He bowed down to King Chandrasena. King Chandrasena ordered Vikramaditya to return the necklace to Shripati.

Vikramaditya said, 'I never lie. I did not take the necklace. Whatever you are thinking has really not happened. The position of the planets in my

horoscope is not favorable to me. That is troubling me. Please have mercy!'

King Chandrasena became furious. He thought that Vikramaditya was playing games with him. He turned to his servants and said, 'cut off his hands and feet. Throw him out of the city and leave him without food or water.' It was actually Lord Shani who spoke through King Chandrasena in that moment.

Immediately the servants took King Vikramaditya to the outskirts of the city and cut off his hands and feet. They left him in a pit to die. King Vikramaditya was in great agony day and night due to severe body pain, hunger and thirst. Some people, who used to pass by, saw him and felt sorry for him. But they were helpless. They could not disobey King Chandrasena's orders and give food or water to Vikramaditya.

In great agony, Vikramaditya wept and begged for mercy from Shani. Lord Shani became merciful and compassionate and decreed through King Chandrasena, 'It is ok to give food and water to the limbless thief.' So, King Vikramaditya began to receive food and water. But being limbless he was in great pain all the time.

One day, an oilman's wife was going to her in-laws' place. She was being carried in a palanquin. She was passing through the forest where Vikramaditya was lying in a pitiable condition. This lady was from Ujjain and her in-laws stayed in the city of Tamalinda.

When she saw the king, she went to talk to him. Immediately she recognized him as the king of Ujjain. In spite of being in pain, King Vikramaditya said to her, 'may you and your husband live for a very long time! Where are you from, lady?' When the lady said that her father's home was in Ujjain, King Vikramaditya was overjoyed. He enquired about the welfare of his people there. The lady said, 'everybody is doing well back home. But, what happened to you?' The King replied, 'This is the result of my fate. The position of the planets in my horoscope was not favorable. So God put me in this condition.' Then he narrated the whole story to that lady.

The kind lady ordered her servants to put King Vikramaditya in the palanquin and brought him to her father-in-law's house with great respect. When her father-in-law saw the limbless king, he hesitated to

house him fearing King Chandrasena's wrath. But his daughter-in-law said that this limbless person was, in fact, King Vikramaditya of Ujjain and that it was their fortune that they could bring him to their home.

Unconvinced, the oilman went to see King Chandrasena and told him that he wished to house the condemned thief as he felt compassion for him. King Chandrasena allowed the oilman to bring the limbless thief home.

Vikramaditya told the oilman, 'Please do not disclose to anybody that I am Vikramaditya, the king of Ujjain.' So the oilman said, 'That is fine with me. You will stay here and I will provide you with food and clothes. You help me operate the grinder to extract oil from peanuts and other nuts. You make sure that the bullock keeps walking and does not stop.'

King Vikramaditya said to him, 'You have done me a great favor. I am really grateful to you.' The king agreed to the work arrangement and he stayed with the oilman for the next seven years.

One breezy evening, King Vikramaditya was watching over the oil grinder when the oil lamp got extinguished by the wind. The bullock stop moving since it was dark. Vikramaditya could not see anything in the pitch darkness. There was no one at home. Vikramaditya could not get up; nor could he summon anyone to light the lamps. Unable to find a solution to the problem, he started singing the Deepaka Raga (दीपक राग). He sang the Raga with such precision that the oil lamp, and thousands of oil lamps all over the city, lit up immediately.

At that time, princess Padmasena was sitting in her palace. When she saw the bright lights outside, she called her maids and asked them what was going on. The maids soon found out about the source of the lights and reported it to the princess. Princess Padmasena asked the maids to go and bring the singer to her. She said that she would marry that singer in a heartbeat. The maids found Vikramaditya at the oil grinder and brought him to the palace.

Padmasena said to Vikramaditya, 'Please continue your singing. I am very much eager to listen to your music. I want to marry you as well.' The king started to sing in a very melodious voice in the palace.

Though he was singing, King Vikramaditya was

worried. Lord Shani's curse for 7 ½ years was about to end. He was thinking when Shani would be pleased with him so that he could return to Ujjain. While he was thinking thus, Shani appeared happily in front of him and said, 'It looks like you have not recognized me due to your ignorance. Did you not experience enough of my wrath?'

King Vikramaditya tried to stand up, but he could not since he had no legs. So, he lay down on the ground and bowed to Lord Shani.



Lord Shani said, 'I am pleased with you, King Vikramaditya! Ask for any boon from me and I will fulfill your wish.'

The King said, 'I only wish that you have mercy and not give any more trouble to mankind. I have suffered a lot but the rest of the people cannot bear the suffering the way I did. That is the only thing I am asking as a boon from you, Lord Shani!' Shani smiled. He restored the king's limbs and made his body handsome and whole. King Vikramaditya bowed down to Shani with respect.

Lord Shani said, 'You think I have troubled you a lot, but I have troubled Guru Brihaspati, Lord Indra, Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, and hordes of other Gods, rakshasas, and humans. When compared to them, your troubles are insignificant. I troubled you just a little bit to demonstrate my extraordinary powers.'

King Vikramaditya got up immediately and bowed down to Shani and said, 'Lord, I am surrendering to you for your mercy. Please favor me by giving me the boon that you will not trouble anybody.' Lord Shani said to Vikramaditya, 'You are great! You think of the pains of other people first. There is no parallel to your thoughts. I am pleased with you.'

He gave this boon to Vikramaditya, 'I will never trouble anyone who will read, listen or preserve this story. I will be pleased with them and I will protect them day and night. I will bring wrath to those who will not read this story or who ridicule this story.'

'One should read this Shani Mahatmya every day or at least every Saturday while fasting. If one cannot do this, one should at least listen to this story day and

night. This will make me happy and I will not trouble them. Such people will also get good fortune.'

Shani thus blessed King Vikramaditya and disappeared. Princess Padmasena garlanded the handsome King Vikramaditya and married him. Meanwhile King Chandrasena came there and asked the handsome King Vikramaditya, 'Sir, who are you?' Vikramaditya said, 'I am your thief. First, please call the merchant Shripati.' The merchant was summoned. When King Chandrasena asked the merchant, the merchant identified King Vikramaditya as the thief.

They all went back to the merchant's studio. When they reached there, they all saw the swan come out of the painting and throw up the pearl necklace it had swallowed. Everybody was surprised to see this and said, 'Though it is impossible, the lifeless swan, as a matter of fact, did swallow the pearl necklace. Alas, this great man was blamed.' The merchant Shripati was apologetic and ecstatic. He immediately gave his daughter in marriage to King Vikramaditya.

Then King Chandrasena asked Vikramaditya, 'Where did you come from? Where is your family? Where were you born?' Then King Vikramaditya said to King Chandrasena, 'My name is Vikramaditya and I am the King of Ujjain.'

When King Chandrasena heard this, he bowed down and said, 'I have offended you very much. Please have mercy on me. Had I known this earlier, you would not have suffered.' Vikramaditya said, 'This happened due to the planetary positions in my horoscope. Also, since I did not worship Lord Shani, I had to suffer.'

King Vikramaditya returned to Ujjain with his two wives and all the gifts that King Chandrasena and the merchant Shripati had given him. All his citizens were very happy to see the king alive and well. King Vikramaditya continued to worship Lord Shani. There were no more troubles due to the blessings from Lord Shani.

This is the story of Sri Shani Mahatmya. May Lord Shani bless all people who read this story with devotion!!

To alleviate their suffering, people fast on Saturdays. They visit the temple to have darshan of Lord Shani

on Saturdays and light lamps with sesame (gingelly) oil and recite the following shloka:

नीलाञ्जन समाभासं रविपुत्रं यमाग्रजम् ।

छायामार्ताण्ड संभूतं तं नमामि शनैश्चरम् ॥

nilaanjana-samaabhaasam-ravi-putram-yamaagrajam|
chaya-maartanda-sambhutam-tam-namami-shanaischaram||

Salutations to that Lord Shani, who is like blue-black antimony, who is the son of Lord Ravi (Surya), who is the elder brother of Yama, who born from Chaya and Martanda (Surya), and who is slow-moving.

Sources: several.

Contributed by Dr. Narasim Banavara

Some Upcoming Special Mandir Events

New Year's Day	Tuesday, Jan 1
Lohri	Sunday, Jan 13
Makar Sankranti / Uttarayan Punya Kaala / Pongal	Monday, Jan 14
Sri Bhagavad Gita Maha Yajna	Sunday, Jan 20
Basant (Vasant) Panchami - Sri Saraswati Puja	Thursday, Feb 14

Please share the joy of Diwali, New Year & the Holidays by making a tax-deductible donation to support the activities and celebrations at your BHARATIYA MANDIR. Your Temple needs your help. Your generosity is highly appreciated.

Mrs. Nilaben and Mr. Nanubhai Patel 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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