

# 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.

We are in the midst of the winter, experiencing bitter cold and all the other elements of winter. We are taking everything in stride, knowing that every season is important and has a role in this universe and in life.

We are eagerly awaiting the advent of the New Year and new hope that arrives with it. We worship Lord Ganapati, the remover of obstacles and the grantor of knowledge and wisdom, on New Year's Day and seek his blessings for a prosperous, healthy and happy New Year ahead.

We will celebrate the harvest festivals of Lodhi, Pongal, and Sankranti and welcome Uttarayan, where the Sun God will now start movement in the northerly direction in the celestial sphere.

We will perform Sri Bhagavad Gita Yajna in January. We will also celebrate Vasant Panchami and Maha Shivaratri, the holiest night in the entire Hindu year.

In this issue, I present, with meanings, Sri Lakshmi Ashtottara Shatanama– the 108 names of Sri Lakshmi. Dr. Padma Sundaram writes about Murugan (also known as Skanda, Karthikeya or Subrahmanya), the son of Lord Shiva and Devi Parvathi.

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](http://www.bharatiyamandir.org)

## सुभाषिता Subhaashitaa

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

नास्ति विद्यासमो बन्धुः नास्ति विद्यासमः सहृत् ।  
नास्ति विद्यासमं वित्तं नास्ति विद्यासमं सुखम् ॥

naasti-vidyaa-samo-bandhuh-naasti-vidyaa-samah-sahrut |  
naasti-vidyaa-samam-vittam-naasti-vidyaa-samam-sukham

There is no relative or friend equivalent to knowledge. There is no kindred equivalent to knowledge. There is no wealth equivalent to knowledge. There is no happiness equivalent to knowledge.

Knowledge reigns supreme. A learned man can always depend on his knowledge to survive, surmount obstacles, come up in the world, and achieve things in life. A knowledgeable man is always highly respected and adored the world over. Knowledge is wealth; using one's knowledge one can achieve much in this world and lead a happy and peaceful life. We should always respect knowledge and learning, and always strive to achieve more of the same.

*Contributed by Dr. Narasim Banavara*

## साई प्रेरणा Baba's Teachings

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

Sri Satya Sai Baba spoke thus – “Human life is highly sacred, noble and divine. It should not be wasted in unworthy pursuits. Take to the sacred path and sanctify your time by chanting the divine name. There is no need to allocate a specific time or place for *Namasmarana*. You can do it wherever you are and whatever you are doing. One needs to pay tax for

water, electricity, etc., but there is no tax for *Namasmarana*. Nobody can stop you from doing it. It is very simple, yet most effective. Many people do not realize its immense value as it is so easy to practice. They think incorrectly that God can be attained only through severe austerities. Chant the divine name without troubling yourself or causing trouble to others. Cultivate love for God. Do not criticize or ridicule anybody. Give happiness to all by sharing your love selflessly. This is true spiritual practice. Follow this simple path, experience *ananda* (bliss) and sanctify your lives. - *Divine Discourse, 24 Feb, 2002.*

Contributed by Dr. Vijaya Dasari

## ज्ञानविहार JnanaVihara

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

### Sri Lakshmi Ashtottara Shatanama Stotram श्री लक्ष्मी अष्टोत्तर शतनाम स्तोत्रम्

Sri Lakshmi Ashtottara Shatanama Stotram is a very essential component in the worship of Sri Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth, fortune, and determination.



Ashtottara Shatanama means one hundred and eight (108) names. Here I present meanings of each of Devi's 108 names in simple terms without going into any philosophical interpretations of any name. In a few

places, I provide a simple explanation of a particular name.

### Om MahaLakshmyai Namah ॐ महालक्ष्म्यै नमः

1. Prakruti (प्रकृति) – Nature

2. Vikruti (विकृति) – Multi-faceted and changing aspect of nature
3. Vidya (विद्या) – Learning and scholarship
4. Sarvabhootahitaprada (सर्वभूतहितप्रदा) – One who grants universal pleasures; One who looks after the welfare of all creatures in the world
5. Shraddha (श्रद्धा) – One who is devoutly worshipped; Devotion
6. Vibhuti (विभूति) – Goddess of greatness and fortune
7. Surabhi (सुरभि) – Celestial; Virtuous
8. Paramaatmika (परमात्मिका) – Greatest; Exalted
9. Vacha (वाच) (or Vak वाक्) – Goddess of speech



10. Padmalaya (पद्मालया) – One who resides on a lotus
11. Padma (पद्मा) – Lotus (symbolizing purity)
12. Shuchi (शुचि) – Goddess of purity
13. Swaha (स्वाहा) – Auspicious
14. Swadha (स्वधा) – Self-power
15. Sudha (सुधा) – Goddess of nectar
16. Dhanya (धन्या) – Nurse; One who takes care of others; Personification of gratitude
17. Hiranmayi (हिरण्मयी) – Golden in appearance

18. Lakshmi (लक्ष्मी) – Goddess of grace, wealth, royal power, success, and prosperity
19. Nityapushta (नित्यपुष्टा) – Well-supplied; Gaining strength day by day
20. Vibhavari (विभावरी) – One who is radiant-faced
21. Aditi (अदिति) – Limitless; Cosmic creator; Mother of the Suras (Gods)
22. Diti (दिति) – Brilliance; Mother of the Maruts and the Asuras
23. Deepta (दीप्ता) – Flame-like; Blazing; Brilliant
24. Vasudha (वसुधा) – Goddess Earth (BhuDevi भूदेवी)
25. Vasudharini (वसुधारिणी) – Protector of the Earth
26. Kamala (कमला) – Lotus
27. Kantha (कान्ता) – Consort of Lord Vishnu
28. Kamakshi (कामाक्षी) – Goddess with attractive eyes
29. Kamalambhava (कमलसम्भवा) – One who emerges from the lotus

**Note:** in some versions of the Stotram, Sri Lakshmi is referred to as Krodhasambhava (क्रोधसम्भवा) – one who emerged from anger – this refers to Mahishasura Mardini (महिषासुरमर्दिनी), where Devi manifested from the combined anger energies of all the Gods in order to vanquish the demon Mahishasura.



30. Anugrahaprada (अनुग्रहप्रदा) – One who grants good wishes
31. Buddhi (बुद्धि) – Goddess of intellect
32. Anagha (अनघा) – Sinless; Pure
33. Harivallabha (हरिवल्लभा) – Consort of Lord Hari (Vishnu)
34. Ashoka (अशोका) – One who dispels sorrows

35. Amrutha (अमृता) – Goddess of nectar (of immortality)
36. Deepta (दीप्ता) – Radiant; Flame-like; Blazing
37. Lokashokavinashini (लोकशोकविनाशिनी) – One who removes the troubles and sorrows of the world
38. Dharmanilaya (धर्मनिलया) – One who establishes eternal law (Dharma)
39. Karuna (करुणा) – Compassionate Goddess
40. Lokamata (लोकमाता) – Universal Mother
41. Padmapriya (पद्मप्रिया) – One who loves the lotus



42. Padmahasta (पद्महस्ता) – One who has lotus-like beautiful hands
43. Padmakshi (पद्माक्षी) – One who has lotus-like beautiful eyes
44. Padmasundari (पद्मसुन्दरी) – One who is beautiful like the lotus
45. Padmodbhava (पद्मोद्भवा) – One who emerges from the lotus
46. Padmamukhi (पद्ममुखी) – Lotus-faced Goddess
47. Padmanabhapriya (पद्मनाभप्रिया) – Beloved of Lord Padmanabha (Lord Vishnu – He is called Padmanabha because He has a lotus emanating from His navel (नाभि). The lotus represents SatyaLoka (सत्यलोक) in which Lord Brahma (ब्रह्मदेव) resides).
48. Ramaa (रमा) – Pleaser of Lord Vishnu
49. Padmamaladhara (पद्ममालाधरा) – One who wears a garland of lotuses
50. Devi (देवी) – Goddess
51. Padmini (पद्मिनी) – Lotus-like
52. Padmagandhini (पद्मगन्धिनी) – One who has a sweet fragrance like the lotus
53. Punyagandha (पुण्यगन्धा) – Divine-perfumed Goddess
54. Suprasanna (सुप्रसन्ना) – Serene, ever-happy, and compassionate Goddess
55. Prasadabhimukhi (प्रसादाभिमुखी) – One who grants boons and wishes

56. Prabha (प्रभा) – Goddess with radiance like the Sun  
 57. Chandravadana (चन्द्रवदना) – Goddess with a Moon-like face  
 58. Chandra (चन्द्रा) – One who emerged after the Moon  
 59. Chandrasahodari (चन्द्रसहोदरी) – Sister of the Moon  
**Note:** After SamudraManthana (समुद्रमन्थन) – the churning of the ocean – by the Devas and Asuras seeking Amrutha (अमृत nectar of immortality), Chandra the Moon arose from the ocean first. Then Sri Lakshmi emerged. Therefore She is referred to as the Sister of Chandra as well as the Daughter of the Ocean.  
 60. Chaturbhuj (चतुर्भुजा) – Four-armed Goddess  
 61. Chandrarupa (चन्द्ररूपा) – Beautiful like the Moon  
 62. Indira (इन्दिरा) – Beautiful; Radiant



63. Indusheetala (इन्दुशीतला) – Calm like the Moon  
 64. Ahladajanani (आह्लादजननी) – Mother bestowing happiness  
 65. Pushti (पुष्टि) – Goddess of health and nourishment  
 66. Shivaa (शिवा) – Goddess of auspiciousness  
 67. Shivakari (शिवकरी) – Embodiment of

auspiciousness; One who confers auspiciousness

68. Sati (सती) – Devoted wife (of Lord Vishnu)  
 69. Vimala (विमला) – Pure  
 70. Vishwajanani (विश्वजननी) – Universal Mother  
 71. Tushti (तुष्टि) – Goddess of contentment  
 72. Daridryanashini (दारिद्र्यनाशिनी) – Remover of poverty and misery  
 73. Preeti Pushkarini (प्रीतिपुष्करिणी) – Ocean of love and affection  
 74. Shanta (शान्ता) – Peaceful Goddess  
 75. Shuklamalyambara (शुक्लमाल्याम्बरा) – One who wears white (pure) clothes  
 76. Sri (श्री) – Goddess of fortune

77. Bhaskari (भास्करी) – Dazzling like the Sun  
 78. Bilvanilaya (बिल्वनिलया) – One who resides under the Bilva tree  
 79. Vararoha (वाररोहा) – Goddess who bestows wishes and boons  
 80. Yashaswini (यशस्विनी) – Goddess of fame and fortune  
 81. Vasundhara (वसुन्धरा) – Mother Earth (Bhudevi भूदेवी)  
 82. Udaranga (उदारङ्गा) – One who has a beautiful body  
 83. Harini (हरिणी) – One who is deer-like  
 84. Hemamalini (हेममालिनी) – One who wears golden garlands  
 85. Dhanadhanyakari (धनधान्यकरी) – One who bestows wealth and grains  
 86. Siddhi (सिद्धि) – Divine energy  
 87. Straina-Soumya (स्त्रैणसौम्या) – One who displays feminine composure and serenity



88. Shubhaprada (शुभप्रदा) – One who grants auspicious things  
 89. Nrupaveshmagathananda (नृपवेशमगतानन्दा) – One who happily goes to live in royal palaces; Goddess of royalty and luxury

90. Varalakshmi (वरलक्ष्मी) – One who grants boons (of prosperity)
91. Vasuprada (वसुप्रदा) – One who bestows boons of wealth and property (land)
92. Shubha (शुभा) – Symbol of auspiciousness
93. Hiranyaprakara (हिरण्यप्राकारा) – One who is surrounded by gold
94. Samudratanaya (समुद्रतनया) – Daughter of the ocean
95. Jaya (जया) – Goddess of victory
96. MangalaDevi (मङ्गलादेवी) – Most auspicious Goddess
97. Vishnuvakshasthalasthita (विष्णुवक्षस्थलस्थिता) – One who resides in Lord Vishnu's chest
98. Vishnupatni (विष्णुपत्नी) – Consort of Lord Vishnu



99. Prasannakshi (प्रसन्नाक्षी) – Lively-eyed
100. Narayana-Samashrita (नारायणसमाश्रिता) – One who seeks refuge in Lord Narayana (Vishnu)
101. Daridryadhvamsini (दारिद्र्यध्वंसिनी) – One who eliminates (destroys) poverty
102. Devi (देवी) – Goddess

103. Sarvopadravanivarini (सर्वोपद्रवनिवारिणी) – One who dispels all forms of unhappiness and troubles
104. Navadurga (नवदुर्गा) – Manifestation of all nine forms of Durga
105. Mahakali (महाकाली) – Goddess Kali
106. Brahma-Vishnu-Shivaatmika (ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवात्मिका) – Embodying the energies of Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Shiva
107. Trikalajnanasampanna (त्रिकालज्ञानसंपन्ना) – One who possesses knowledge of the past, the present and the future
108. Bhuvaneshwari (भुवनेश्वरी) – Supreme Goddess of the Universe

*Contributed by Dr. Narasim Banavara*

### MURUGAN (मुरुगन्)

I had a small synopsis of Murugan when I described the predominantly Tamil and Kerala festival of ThiruKarthigai, which is celebrated on the Purnima day in the month of Karthika (usually falls between the 15<sup>th</sup> of November and 15<sup>th</sup> of December). This festival is also called Karthika Deepam (कार्तिक दीपम्) or Sarvalaya Deepam (सर्वालय दीपम्). Although Murugan is known as a predominantly South Indian God, earlier archeological evidence shows that he is a North Indian God also. Coins with Murugan on them were found in North India and also some statues were found resembling the ones found in the south.



There are two Murugan temples in north India, one in Delhi called the Malai Mandir meaning “temple on the hill” and one in Haryana.

The Skanda Purana is one of the 18 Puranas written by Sage Veda Vyasa. Murugan is also called Skanda (स्कन्द), which means a great warrior who can vanquish the whole world with his valor.

Murugan is known by several names, such as Kartikeya (कार्तिकेय), Subrahmanya (सुब्रह्मण्य), Shanmukha (षण्मुख), Kumaraswamy (कुमारस्वामि), etc. He is the God of Energy. He is worshipped as a God of war, victory, wisdom and love. He is worshipped outside the Indian subcontinent where there is Tamil influence, like Sri Lanka, Jaffna, Singapore, Malaysia and Mauritius.

**Historic development:** The ancient Sangam work, Tolkappiyam, goes back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and describes Murugan as “a red God seated on a blue peacock who is ever young and resplendent as the favored God of the Tamils”. The Sangam poetry divides Tamil Nadu into five allegorical areas and Murugan is said to have been the presiding deity of the Kurunci region (hilly area). Probably that is the reason that all the Murugan temples are situated on hills.

**Story of his birth:** Murugan is the son of Lord Shiva and Devi Parvathi. Shiva's first wife Sati, daughter of Daksha, immolated herself in the fire because her father insulted her husband Shiva. After this, Lord Shiva became disinterested in everything and went to deep meditation. The Asuras took this opportune time to go to war with the Devas, defeated them, and made the Devas their slaves. The Devas could not defeat the Asuras as their leaders Surapadma (सुरपद्म) and his older brother Tarakasura (तारकासुर) had boons that they could be killed only by a son of Shiva. At this time Sati was reborn as Parvathi to Himavan, king of the Himalaya Mountain. By doing severe penance, Parvathi married Lord Shiva.

The Devas were being troubled by Surapadma, Tarakasura, and the other Asuras. The Devas went to Lord Vishnu seeking his help. Lord Vishnu said that this was the result of their attending the Havan done by Daksha where Shiva was insulted. The Devas had no choice but beg Lord Shiva for help. The Lord decided to take action. He opened His third eye and six sparks (tejas तेजस्) came out. He gave the responsibility of taking these sparks to Saravana Lake to the God of Fire Agni (अग्निदेव). Agni carried the sparks, but the sparks became very hot and unbearable even for Agni. After a while, he could not bear to carry them. So, he dropped them in the river Ganga. Later, Ganga deposited the sparks in a group of lotus

leaves among a thicket of reeds. The sparks turned into six beautiful babies. Now Shiva and Parvathi came there and were overjoyed to see these babies. Parvathi embraced all of them and they became one beautiful baby with six faces and twelve arms. Lord Shiva gave the responsibility of bringing the child up



to the six Krittika sisters (Pleiades stars).

Since Murugan is the son of Lord Shiva and Devi Parvathi, he is referred to as Shiva-suta (शिवसुत) and Parvathi-nandana (पार्वतीनन्दन). Since Agni carried the sparks, he is known as Agni-janma (अग्निजन्म son of Agni). Since Ganga held the sparks in her waters, he is known as Ganga-suta (गङ्गासुत son of Ganga). Since the six Krittika sisters took care of him, he is referred to as Kathikeya (कार्तिकेय son of the Krittika sisters).

**Childhood:** Murugan grew up to be a very handsome, intelligent and powerful young man. He displayed enormous power and valor. As a prank, he killed all the Devas, even Lord Indra. Sage Brihaspati intervened and brought them all back to life. Once, Murugan asked Lord Brahma the meaning of Omkara (ॐकार). Lord Brahma ignored him and said, “I am the meaning of Omkara.” Murugan wanted to bring his ego down. So he hit Brahma on the head and jailed him in Skandagiri. Then Murugan took on the job of creation with ease. But his father, Lord Shiva, intervened and Lord Brahma was released.

Then Lord Shiva asked Murugan the meaning of Omkara. Murugan explained it in great detail and Shiva listened to him like a disciple. Hence, Murugan is known as Swaminathan (स्वामिनाथन् Lord of the Lord).

Once, Sage Narada came to Kailash with a ripe mango in his hand. He told Ganesha and Murugan that he would give the mango to the one who could go around the world in the fastest time. Murugan got on his peacock and went on his way to go around the world. But Ganesha went around his father and came to Narada and asked for the mango. When asked why he went around his father instead of the world, Ganesha replied that his father is the entire world. When Murugan came back, Ganesha had already eaten the mango. Murugan now understood that he needed to shed his ego and he bowed to his elder brother.



Admiring the power and valor of Murugan, Lord Indra prayed to him to become the commander of the Devas' army. Lord Shiva asked Murugan to go to war with the Asuras and vanquish them. Shiva gave his son eleven weapons in his eleven hands and Parvathi gave the Shakti weapon in his 12<sup>th</sup> hand.

Murugan's first war was with Tarakasura whom he vanquished. Then he marched southwards offering worship at all the Shiva temples on the way. He then reached Tiruchendur in Tamil Nadu near Rameswaram on the seashore. Here he fought severe battles with the asura Surapadma. The battle lasted six days. All the asuras were killed except Surapadma. Seeing all the army dead, Surapadma's mother Maya bade Surapadma to bring the Sudhamandara hills from across the ocean. When he brought the hills, the breeze from the hills touched the dead army and all of them were brought back to life. Now Murugan used

the Pashupathastra (पाशुपतास्त्र) and killed the entire army. Surapadma assumed the forms of various fierce animals and also the forms of Rudra (Shiva), Vishnu and Brahma. Murugan killed all of the forms.

Then Murugan showed his Vishwarupa (विश्वरूप – Universal Form) to the Devas and Surapadma saw this too. When he saw the beautiful Vishwarupa, he developed intense devotion to Murugan. Then Murugan assumed his boyish form. Surapadma came at him as a huge mango tree, which Murugan split into two with his sword. The two parts became a fierce peacock and a rooster. As Murugan glanced at them with his beautiful eyes, the birds calmed down. Murugan graced them with knowledge and took the peacock as his vehicle and the rooster as the emblem on his flag. It is said that in their previous life, Sura and Padma were brothers and had prayed that they wanted to be Murugan's vehicle and the emblem on his flag. Their prayers were answered.

**Marriage:** In many scriptures, Murugan is described to be a Brahmachari (ब्रह्मचारि celibate youth). In other scriptures, it is said that Lord Indra requested Murugan to marry his daughter Devasena. There is a story behind the marriage of Skanda (Murugan). There were two sisters Amrutavalli and Sundaravalli, who were born from the two eyes of Lord Vishnu. Both of them developed undying devotion for Murugan and wanted to be his consorts. At Murugan's instructions, Amrutavalli incarnated as Indra's daughter Devasena. Sudaravalli took the form of Valli. She was found as a baby in the Laveli creeper plants by a hunter named Nambiraja, who brought her up near Kanchipuram. As Valli grew up she was looking after the barley fields. She used to sing to drive away the birds that came to eat the grains. Murugan saw her in the fields, and after a lot of sportive love pranks, with the help from his brother Ganesha, Murugan married Valli.

**Temples:** The main temples of Murugan are in Tamil Nadu in South India. There are six important temples called Arupadaiveedu meaning six abodes. The temple in Tiruchendur is the only one on the seashore. The other temples are on top of hills. They are Swamimalai in Tanjavur, Pazamudircholai near Madurai, Palani, Tirupparakundram and Tiruvannamalai. In Karnataka, the most important temple is in Kukke Subrahmanya near Mangalore. In

this temple, he is worshipped in the serpent form as the Lord of Serpents. This is because Subrahmanya (Murugan) gave protection to Vasuki, the serpent king, from the threat of Garuda.



At the Batu Caves near Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, there is a statue of Murugan 42.7 meters (140 feet) high. There is one temple in Sri Lanka and one in Jaffna. There are Murugan temples in Singapore, Canada, USA, New Zealand, Switzerland and UK. Tuesdays are dedicated to Murugan Pujas.

There is a small poem written by the ancient Tamil poet Kacciyappa Sivacharyar in Kanta Puranam about the birth of Murugan. The translation is as follows:

*The fiery mass that stood as Brahman  
That hath no beginning  
Assuming a form from a formless  
From several unto one  
Thus rose Thiru-Muruga  
With six merciful faces and twelve eyes  
For the universe to get rescued.*

Murugan is often referred to as Tamil Kadavul (Tamil God). One poem describes Murugan –

*“We implore thee not for boons of enjoyment or wealth,  
But for thy grace beatific, love and virtuous deeds”*

Murugan never hesitates to rush to the aid of devotees when called upon in piety or distress. As with any mythological narrative, there are differences, but the main thematic material is very similar. I have tried to include a lot of material in a nutshell and hope the article will give you some understanding of this great son of Lord Shiva. May Skanda’s blessings be with us and guide us through life!!

**References:** Wikipedia; “Kumaran: the ever merciful Lord” by SRS Ayyar; “Grandeur of Tirupugazh”, Bharatha Vidya Bhavan 1996; “Smile of Murugan” by Kamil Zvelabil.

*Contributed by Dr. Padma Sundaram.*

### Some Upcoming Special Mandir Events

New Year’s Day	Thursday, Jan 1
Lohri	Tuesday, Jan 13
Uttarayana Punya Kaala / Makara Sankranti / Pongal	Wednesday, Jan 14
Srimad Bhagavad Gita Maha Yajna	Sunday, Jan 18
Vasant Panchami Celebrations	Saturday, Jan 31
Maha Shivaratri	Tuesday, Feb 17

Devotees may note that all the writing of the content and the editing of the newsletter are strictly voluntary. ***We need you to come forward and sponsor the printing of this quarterly newsletter for the sake of all devotees.***

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

**Dharma Sandesh Newsletter Editorial Board:**

**Dr. Narasim Banavara**

**Dr. Padma Sundaram**