



HINDU SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH'S
balagokulam
HINDU DHARMA FOR KIDS, TEACHERS & PARENTS



Syllabus

Year I, Quarter IV

Age Group : 9 to 12

Gokulam is the place where Lord Krishna's magical days of childhood were spent. It was here that his divine powers came to light.

Every child has that spark of divinity within. Balagokulam is a forum for children to discover and manifest that divinity. It will enable Hindu children in US to appreciate their cultural roots and learn Hindu values in an enjoyable manner. This is done through weekly gatherings and planned activities which include games, yoga, stories, shlokas, bhajan, arts and crafts and much more.....

Balagokulam is a program of Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS)

Table of Contents

October

Shloka / Subhashitam / Amrutvachan	4
Geet	6
God or Gods	7
Navaratri.....	10
Vijayadashami	12
Exercise	15
Project	17

November

Shloka / Subhashitam / Amrutvachan	18
Geet	20
Deepavali.....	21
Story of Guru Nanak Devji	24
Goddesses.....	27
Exercise	30
Project	33

December

Shloka / Subhashitam / Amrutvachan	34
Geet	36
Overview of Sangh Utsavs.....	37
Gita Jayanti.....	40
Ideal Hindu Home	42
Exercise	45
Project	47

Shloka

शमी वन्दना (ShamI VandanA)

शमी शमयते पापम्	shamI shamayate pApam
शमी शत्रुविनाशिनी ।	shamI shatruvinAshinI
अर्जुनस्य धनुर्धारी	arjunasya dhanurdhArI
रामस्य प्रियदर्शिनी ॥	rAmasya priyadarshinI

Shamee, the remover of all sins, the destroyer of all enemies bore witness to Arjuna taking how bow and Shree Rama coming back to his near and dear ones.

योगासन समये (Before Yogasana)

योगेन चित्तस्य पदेन वाचा	yogena chittasya padena vAchA
मलं शरीरस्य च वैद्यकेन ।	malanm Sharirasya cha vaidya-kena
योऽपाकरोत्तं प्रवरं मुनीनां	yo-a-paakarottam pravaram muninaa
पतञ्जलिं प्राञ्जलिरानतोऽस्मि ॥	patanjalim praanjali-raanato-a-smi

With joined hands, I stay bowed to Patanjali-the preeminent among the sages, who removed the impurities of the mind by (explaining) yoga, of the speech by (commenting on) grammar and of the body by (expounding) medicine.

Subhashitam

तेजः क्षमा धृतिः शौचमद्रोहो नातिमनिता ।
भवन्ति सम्पदं दैविम् अभिजातस्य भारत ॥

tejaH xamA dhR^itiaH shaucamadroho nAtimanitA |
bhavanti sampadaM daivim abhijAtasya bhArata ||

Splendor, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, absence of malice and absence of pride; these are the qualities of those endowed with divine virtues, O Arjuna.

Amrutvachan

When a man has begun to be ashamed of his ancestors, the end has come. Here I am one of the least of the Hindu race, yet proud of my race, proud of my ancestors. I am proud to call myself a Hindu, I am proud that I am one of your unworthy servants. I am proud that I am countryman of yours. You are the descendants of the sages, you are descendants of the most glorious Rishis that world ever saw.



- Swami Vivekananda

Geet

Bala Sagar Samaj Hove

Bala sagar samaj hove, Ravi Saman jagme sohe

Sankalp kare manas me, Sarvaswa liye haathome
Bhoomata ke charanome, Arpan kar hum mit jaave
Bala sagar samaj hove (1)

Haathome haath mile ho, Hridayonse hriday jude ho
Aikya Mantra mukh me nit ho, Satkarya hetu sab aave
Bala sagar samaj hove (2)

Vyakti vyakti kaa anushasan, Balvaan samaj chirantan
Jay vaibhav ka aashwasan, Yaha parivartan phir laave
Bala sagar samaj hove (3)

Jansewa Iishwar bhakti, Jaagrit ho samaj shakti
Isme hi jeevan mukti, Ab jeevan kritarth hove
Bala sagar samaj hove (4)

Meaning

Let the society be strong, It should shine like the sun.

Let us make a solemn resolution for sake of humanity, to offer ourselves at the feet of mother Earth. Let us completely dedicate ourselves for the cause.

Let us join our hands and let the hearts meet. The song of unity should always be on the tips of the tongue. Let us all come together for this noble cause.

By developing personal discipline, the whole society gains strength. This is the only guarantee for victory and prosperity. We will bring such change in society.

Service to the people is service to God. We will awaken society and invoke strength in it. Now, this will be the only salvation (moksha) and satisfaction for me.



God or Gods?

So, you are sitting in your world history class and your teacher is about to discuss (hold your breath) ... INDIA (Bharat)! Wonder in itself!! You are dreading with anticipation all the questions everyone is going to ask you, the only Hindu in your class!

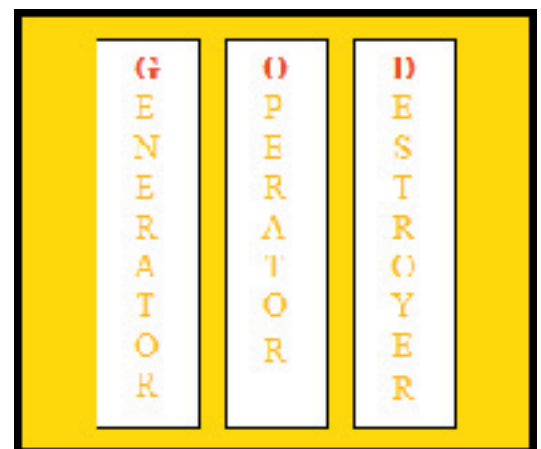
Someone will ask, “How come you worship a cow”? Another will say, “Do you have to wear that dot all the time”? And hear comes the hardest, “Do you really worship 330 million gods”? Then you begin to wonder yourself, “Do I really believe in that many Gods”? The answer is both yes and no. Confused? Let’s investigate.

Many people think that Hindus are polytheistic (a group of people that believe in many different gods), but that is not true. Hindus believe that there is only one God who can be worshiped by anyone, in any form and by any name. But how can one thing be known by so many different names? Well, let’s take a look at Raju.

Raju is your average guy, who goes to work everyday. He has two kids and wife. He also has a dog named Big Bear. Every evening, he goes to his friend’s house and hangs out with a lot of guys.

Since Raju does so many different things, he is also known by many different names. To his kids, Raju is a dad. To his wife, Raju is a husband. To Big Bear, Raju is an owner and best friend. And all of Raju’s friends know him as Raju Bhai (brother). So, though Raju is really just one person he can be known in many different ways.

In Hindu Dharma, God has appeared in many many forms for specific purpose and goal. Let us try to explore three major forms of God. Each one of the three forms represents one major part of God. There is a Generator (someone who creates), the Operator (someone who maintains) and a Destroyer (someone who



takes things apart so they can be created again). An easy way to remember the three parts is by breaking up the word GOD.

Now let's find out how these three parts are seen in Hindu Dharma.

The Generator

In Hindu Dharma, Brahma is known as the Generator or Creator. In the form of Brahma, God created the universe, the world, the demigods and all living beings.

Brahma is usually shown red in color with four heads, bearded faces, and four arms. In his hands Brahma holds four sacrificial tools: a kamandalu (pot), a rosary (a sacred string of beads), a ladle, and the Vedas. He is usually portrayed sitting on a lotus or riding a white swan, which is known for its judgment between good and evil. Unlike other gods, Brahma is never shown holding weapons.



Brahma's main function is to create worlds. A day for Brahma is an entire life span for a world. He creates the world in the morning, it is destroyed by the night and he creates another world the next morning.

The Operator

The most popular form of God is the Operator or Vishnu. Vishnu has four arms – one holds a shankha (conch shell) a sign of the divine sound “Aum,” the second holds a chakra (discus) to represent the wheel of time, the third holds Padma (a lotus) as an example of glorious existence, and the last holds a gada (mace) to indicate the power and punishing capacity of the Lord if discipline in life is ignored. He lies on Seshanaga (a powerful, coiled serpent) who represents the sleeping universe.



In order to keep the world at peace, Vishnu will incarnate or take avatars (forms taken by Vishnu on Earth to save the world from evil and establish righteousness) ten times. So far, Vishnu has taken the nine forms. They are - Matsya, Kurma, Varaha,

Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama and Krishna. All these forms of Vishnu are described at length in earlier chapters.

The tenth avatar of Vishnu is Kalki. When Kalki takes form, it will be the last time Vishnu will help save the world from evil. Afterwards, the cycle of the world's destruction and regeneration will begin.

The Destroyer

Shiva, the Destroyer, has a blue complexion that stands for an endless body, like the blue sky or ocean. He carries a snake around his neck, which represents evolutionary power (the power to keep growing and changing) in the human body.

Two well known forms of Shiva are Yogiraj and Nataraj. In Yogiraj (king of yoga), Shiva is seen sitting in meditation with his eyes half-closed. This pose symbolizes peace and perfect inner harmony. The Nataraj (king of dance) form shows Shiva in the endless cosmic dance.

Nataraj has four hands – one is holding a drum to announce the Big Bang at the beginning of the universe, the next is holding the fire of destruction, the third offers blessings and the last hand points to the raised food which shows how to rise above ignorance. The other foot is planted firmly on a man who symbolizes ignorance. Nataraj's blazing hair represents movement within a circle of fire and the circle encasing him shows that there is no end or beginning to the universe.

Once all ten incarnations of Vishnu have finished their role, Shiva must begin to destroy the world so that Brahma can create again. This destruction is not bad nor harmful, but it is useful. One can think of this process like snipping off the dead leaves from a plant so new ones can grow in its place.

This grouping of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva is called the Trimurti – the Hindu Trinity. The Trimurti is usually displayed as one body with the three separate heads of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Now, though Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva were separately described and have their own unique features, one must remember that in the end they are all one and the same. Thus, the Trimurti demonstrates that the Generator, Operator and Destroyer ultimately work together as GOD.





Navaratri

Navaratri is a festival of Goddess Durga. Goddess Durga is also known as Universal Mother. Goddess Durga is believed to exist in many forms such as Goddess Bhavani, Jagdamba, Mahakali, Chamundeshwari and Amba. The word “navaratri” literally means nine nights. This festival is celebrated for 9 days. The nine days are divided and devoted to Saraswati (Goddess of Learning), Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity), and Durga (Goddess of Strength and Courage).

Goddess Durga is considered as a Goddess of Strength, power and courage. In other words, SHE is energy (and power) aspect of Gods. That is why SHE is also known as “Shakti (power)”. Thus on this day, we invoke the energy aspect of God in the form of Durga. Literally, Durga means the remover of miseries of life.

Goddess Durga is considered as energy aspect of Gods. What does it mean? Why is Goddess Durga worshipped on this day? And why for 9 days? Well! There is striking story behind this. The story goes like this: The demon Mahishasura performed severe penance and became the ruler of the three worlds; heaven, earth and the nether-world. Unable to stand his atrocities, Gods requested Lord Vishnu to help. Lord Vishnu advised them that Mahishasura could be killed only when the combined power and strength of all gods strikes him. Gods, including Lord Vishnu, combined their powers in a physical form of Goddess Durga. This is how Goddess Durga came into existence as a combined and organized strength and power of all Gods. Goddess Durga, then, fought with the demon Mahishasura. The battle lasted long for nine days. At last, on the tenth day, Goddess Durga killed the demon Mahishasura and freed the three worlds from his shackles. That is why SHE is also called by “Mahishasura Mardini”, which means destroyer of Mahishasura.



How is it celebrated?

Navaratri is divided into sets of three days to adore different aspects of the supreme Goddess. On the first three days, the Supreme Goddess is invoked as a

powerful force called Durga in order to destroy all our impurities, vices and defects. The next three days, the Supreme Goddess is adored as a giver of spiritual and inexhaustible wealth, Lakshmi. The last three days are spent in worshipping the Supreme as the goddess of wisdom, Saraswati. In order to have all-round success in life, we need the blessings of all three aspects of the Divine Supreme.

The most common form of public celebration is the performance of garba or dandia-ras. Garba is a graceful form of dance, wherein women dressed in exquisitely embroidered choli, ghagra and bandhani dupattas, dance gracefully in circles around a pot containing a lamp. Besides the Garba is the “Dandia” dance, in which men and women participate in pairs with small, decorated bamboo sticks called dandias in their hands. The dances usually commence late in the night and continue until early morning. Another prevalent practice is of sowing pulses, cereals and other seeds on the first day of this festival in a pot, which is watered for nine days at the end of which the seeds sprout. This pot is worshipped throughout the nine days.



There are some other modes of public celebration too. People set up an odd number of steps (usually 7, 9, or 11), and place different images of Gods on them. This setup is called a Golu. Other people are invited to come and see Golu and they are given prasada (the offering given to God that day), kumkum (red powder). Majestic processions of elephants and horses to the temple, particularly Durga temple are also very common. Just like Ganesh-Pooja, people build temporary but huge and beautifully decorated puja mandaps and place images of the Goddess Durga and all together worship for 9 days. On the tenth day (Vijayadashami) processions with Durga’s image are taken out along the streets and immersed in water. Although there have been different forms of celebrations, the purpose of celebration is one and the same – worship Goddess Durga and get the blessings of all three aspects of the divine supreme.

What message does it deliver?

The striking story of Mahishasura Mardini says that Gods could kill Mahishasura only when their power and strength combined together in an organized fashion. Even good and righteousness can not win over evil, if not organized and united. Even in today’s world, being good and superior on an individual level is not sufficient. All good people should be united and organized. Only in that case they can win over the evil forces. Truly it has been said that - “Sanghe Shaktih Kalau yuge” - means organization holds the key to strength in Kaliyug (today’s time).





Vijayadashami

Vijayadashami is one of the most important festivals of Hindus. The way Deepavali is festival of lights, Vijayadashami is a festival of victory. In Samskritam, 'Vijaya' means victory and 'Dashami' means 10th day. Thus 'Vijaya Dashami' means victory on the 10th day. It is one of the most auspicious days for the Hindus. It is celebrated in the month of October. It comes as the finale of the nine-day festival of Navaratri.

Navaratri festival is celebrated for 9 days. On the 9th day, Saraswati pooja is celebrated. Special poojas are offered to Goddess Saraswati - the divine source of wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment and Goddess Durga – Goddess of Strength and power. The 10th day is "Vijayadasami". This festival of victory is preceded by worship of Goddess Saraswati and Goddess Durga.

Vijayadashami - a festival of victory

Vijayadashami is a festival of victory because it is resplendent with many an inspiring episode reflecting the victorious culmination of deeds of valour of our ancestors. This day is marked by significant victories in Ramayan and Mahabharat.

It is said in Ramayana that on this day Shri Rama killed the demon Ravana and achieved a triumphant victory over the demons. Shri Rama worshipped Goddess Durga just before the battle with the demon Ravana started. Shri Rama worshipped Shami tree on this day just before proceeding to Ayodhya.

In Mahabharata, Pandavas spent thirteen years in exile. During the last year of Ajnaat-vaas (living incognito), they had hidden their arms in the Shami tree. This is the day, their ajnnat-vaas was over and they had taken out their arms from the Shami tree and revealed their identity. That marked their preparation for the victorious war of Kurukshetra. Invoking these inspiring memories, the Shami tree is worshipped on this day.

The story of how the demon Mahishasura was killed is also striking. Demon Mahishasura performed severe penance and became immortal and ruler of all three worlds; heaven, earth and the nether-world. Gods became powerless. As per Lord Vishnu's advice, they parted with a portion of their divine powers to form into a new physical form – Goddess Mahishasura Mardini. Literally “Mahishasura Mardini” means destroyer of Mahishasura. Thus Goddess Mahishasura Mardini took a physical form as the combined might of all Gods. She killed the demon Mahishasura after a ceaseless fight of nine days and nights.

Celebrations

Grand processions of all Gods and goddesses are taken out in every town and village on this day, signifying the victory of the forces of righteousness over those of wickedness. It marks a new and prosperous beginning. New ventures started on this day are believed to flourish and bring prosperity. Children being tutored on this day - to have a head start in their education. In the medieval period, the Hindu Kings and Emperors used to start their mission on this day.

In old days, each individual used to carry a weapon. They used to worship their weapons on this day. It is called “Aayudha (weapons) Pooja”. The same tradition is continued with some modifications. Now-a-days Hindu people worship different types of things which are modes of their earning and progress. For example, students worship books, businessmen worship their factories and machines, musicians worship their instruments and technical workers worship their tools. Even vehicles are also washed, decorated and worshipped.

To celebrate Shri Rama's victory, Rama-leela is observed by the people with great enthusiasm and éclat. Ram-Leela is a stage enactment of Ramayana. On this day, people arrange a street play based on the Rama-Ravana war. They create dummies (effigies) of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and



Ravana. Rama-Lakshmana aim at Ravana's dummy with burning arrows and burn dummy Ravana. After that, people welcome Rama, Seeta and Lakshmana as if they are welcoming real ones.

The lesson of this legend is so beautifully clear. Even the good and the righteous can succeed against the evil forces only when they come together in an organized endeavour. Could there be a more telling message to the present-day?

Vijayadashami as a HSS Balagokulam Utsav

Vijayadashami is celebrated as one of the six utsavs of HSS. For HSS, Vijayadashami is more special than just a festival. It is because this day is the birth day of an organization - Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) - which has been the source of inspiration for HSS. On this very day, a great Hindu leader, Dr. Hedgewar, founded RSS in Bharat in 1925 for the rejuvenation and reorganization of the age-old Hindu Dharma.

Truely it has been said that Sanghe Shaktih Kalau Yuge - Organization holds the key to strength in Kaliyuga (today's world). Dr. Hedgewar realized that though Hindu people are immensely superior in culture, wealth and armies, they were defeated by foreign aggressors because they were disorganized. Though having all qualities of "Universal Dharma", Hindu Dharma has not been able to achieve that status because of disorganized Hindu people. Doctorji started RSS in Bharat on this day to organize Hindu people in Bharat. Keeping the tradition of Vijayadashami, RSS has been marching from success to success in all sectors of life.

Organizing Hindu society outside Bharat is also necessary which is one of the objectives of HSS. Vijayadashami being a festival of victory and a birth day of RSS, HSS too has given it a place in its six utsavs.



-: Exercise :-

Match the Pairs

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) Vijayadashami | 1) Festival of Goddess Durga |
| 2) Gods | 2) Stage inaction of Ramayana |
| 3) Navaratri | 3) Lord Brahma |
| 4) Rama-Leela | 4) Lord Vishnu |
| 5) The Generator | 5) Goddess of Strength |
| 6) The Operator (Preserver) | 6) Festival of Victory |
| 7) Durga | 7) Divine Supreme in many forms |

Fill up the blanks

- 1) Three major forms of God are _____, _____ and _____.
a) Doctorji b) Brahma c) Vishnu d) Shiva
- 2) Shri Rama killed the demon Ravana on the day of _____.
a) New year b) Navaratri c) Vijayadashami d) None of these
- 3) Navaratri is a _____ day festival.
a) Eight b) Nine c) Ten d) Two
- 4) Vijaya means _____ and dashami means 10th day.
a) Loss b) Victory c) Defeat d) None of these
- 5) Goddess _____ posseses combined power of all Gods.
a) Lakshami b) Saraswati c) Durga d) None of these
- 6) Pandavas spent _____ years in exile.
a) Thirteen b) Thirty c) Twenty d) None of these
- 7) Vijayadashami comes right after _____.
a) Deepavali b) Navaratri c) Samkranti d) None of theses

Questions

1) Describe the concept of having many gods?

2) Describe briefly the tasks of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

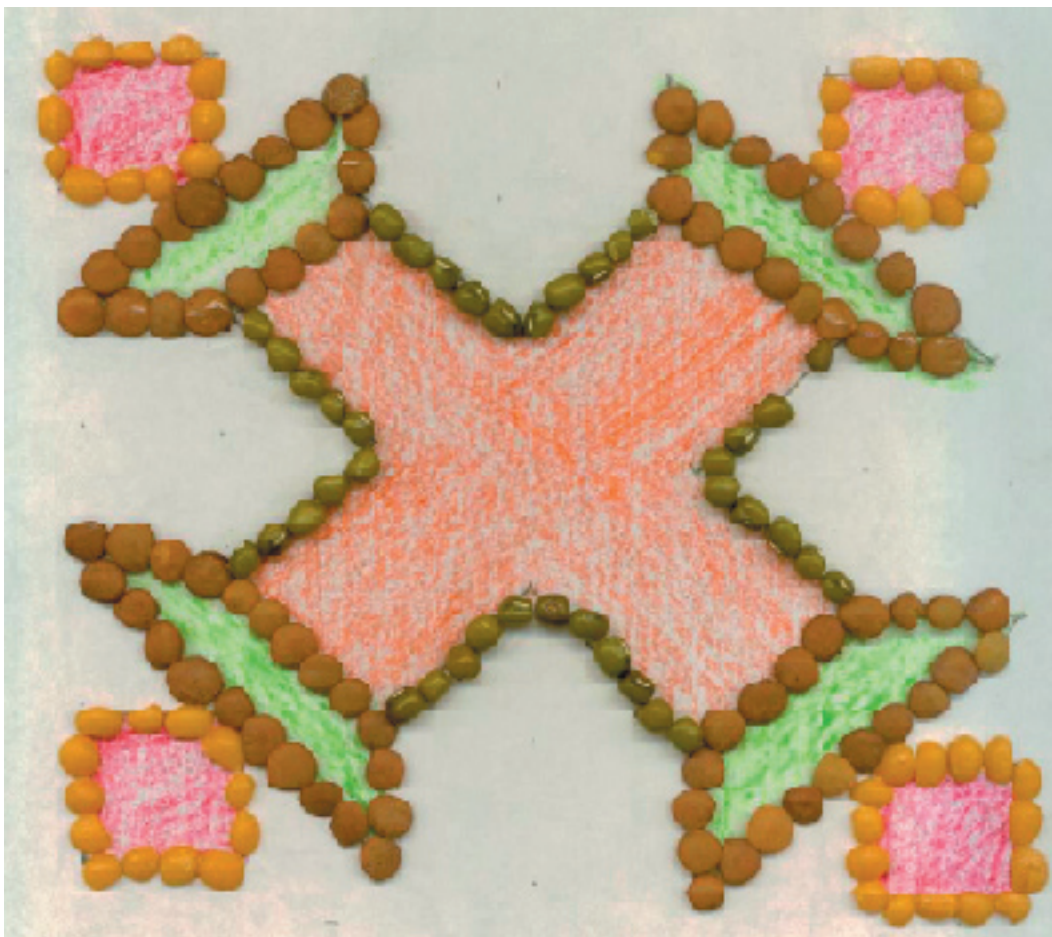
3) Why is Vijayadashami known as a festival of victory?

4) What messages do Navaratri and Vijayadashami festivals deliver?

RANGOLI

Rangoli is one of the arts of Bharat. It is a traditional way of decorating courtyards and walls of houses, places of worship and sometimes eating places as well. Traditionally the powder of white stone, lime, rice flour and other cheap paste is used to draw intricate patterns. But if powder is not available, markers can also be used to draw different patterns of Rangoli. Let us try to learn here a simple design (pattern) of Rangoli.

- a) Draw a rangoli pattern with markers onto a construction paper (see below for one type of idea).
- b) Put the construction paper onto a cardboard (for better support when decorating).
- c) Decorate the patterns with different types of colored dals: moong dal, mag, tuar dal, whatever dried beans we have at home.



Shloka

दीपोज्वलनम् (Deepojvalnam)

शुभं करोति कल्याणम् ।	śubham karoti kalyāṇam
आरोग्यं धन-सम्पदा ॥	ārogyam dhana-sampadā
शत्रुबुद्धिर्विनाशाय ।	śatrubuddhirvināśāya
दीपज्योतिर्नमोस्तुते ॥	dīpajyotirnamostute

The lamp brings auspiciousness, prosperity, good health and abundance of wealth. Let (my) salutations be to you for the destruction of ignorance, which is the intellect's enemy.

लक्ष्मी वन्दना (Lakshami Vandana)

सर्वज्ञे सर्ववरदे	Sarvagye sarva-varade
सर्वदुष्टभङ्गरि ।	sarva-dushta-bhayankari
सर्वदुःखहरे देवि	Sarva duh-kh hare devi
महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥	mahaa-lakshmi namo-a-stu te

You know every thing. You give all kinds of boon to all. All demons fear of you. You destroy all kinds of unhappiness. O MahaaLakshmi, I bow to you.

Subhashitam

अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धि ज्ञानयोग व्यवस्थितिः ।
दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यास्तप आर्जवम् ॥

abhayaM sattvasaMshuddhi GYAnayoga vyavasthitiH |
dAnaM damashca yaGYashca svAdhyAstapa Arjavam ||

Fearlessness, purity of heart, perseverance in the yoga of knowledge, charity, sense restraint, sacrifice, study of scriptures, austerity, honesty.

Amrutvachan



We are to take care of ourselves-that much we can do-and give up attending to others for a time. Let us perfect the means; the end will take care of itself. For the world can be good and pure, only if our lives are good and pure. It is an effect, and we are the means. Therefore, let us purify ourselves. Let us make ourselves perfect.

- Swami Vivekananda

Geet

Bala Sagar Samaj Hove

Bala sagar samaj hove, Ravi Saman jagme sohe

Sankalp kare manas me, Sarvaswa liye haathome
Bhoomata ke charanome, Arpan kar hum mit jaave
Bala sagar samaj hove (1)

Haathome haath mile ho, Hridayonse hriday jude ho
Aikya Mantra mukh me nit ho, Satkarya hetu sab aave
Bala sagar samaj hove (2)

Vyakti vyakti kaa anushasan, Balvaan samaj chirantan
Jay vaibhav ka aashwasan, Yaha parivartan phir laave
Bala sagar samaj hove (3)

Jansewa Iishwar bhakti, Jaagrit ho samaj shakti
Isme hi jeevan mukti, Ab jeevan kritarth hove
Bala sagar samaj hove (4)

Meaning

Let the society be strong, It should shine like the sun.

Let us make a solemn resolution for the sake of humanity, to offer ourselves at the feet of mother Earth. Let us completely dedicate ourselves for the cause.

Let us join our hands and let the hearts meet. The song of unity should always be on the tip of the tongue. Let us all come together for this noble cause.

By developing personal discipline, the whole society gains strength. This is the only guarantee for victory and prosperity. We will bring such change in society.

Service to the people is service to God. We will awaken society and invoke strength in it. Now, this will be the only salvation (moksha) and satisfaction for me.



Deepavali

Deepavali is the festival of lights. Deepa means light and Avali means a row. It means a row of lights. Deepavali, in short, is a celebration for adoration of light. Deepavali has a special place among all the festivals of Hindus. Its greatest characteristic is that it is not related to any specific caste, class or province. Even non-Hindus celebrate this Hindu festival. It is truly a universal festival. The festival is celebrated by all people with great enthusiasm to dispel darkness and light up their lives.

The festival symbolizes unity in diversity as every province celebrates it in its own special way. People wear new and bright clothes. The radiant sight



of everybody adorned with new and bright clothes, especially women adorned with the best of ornaments, captures the social mood at its happiest. People clean and paint their houses and adorn them by lighting up "Diyas" (earthen lamps) and making "Rangoli" in front of their houses. Even the humblest of huts

are lighted by a row of "Diyas". People invite their friends and neighbours and offer them sweets and snacks specially prepared for the festival. They send greeting-cards to loved ones.

Crackers (fireworks) resound and light up the earth and the sky. Illumination - Deepotsavas - and fireworks, joy and festivity, is to signify the victory of divine forces over wickedness. Illumination in temples and all sacred places of worship symbolize the scattering of spiritual radiance all round from these holy centers. And all this illumination and fireworks, joy and festivity, is to signify the victory of divine forces over those of wickedness.



Deepavali is generally a 5 day festival. Those 5 days are - Dhana-trayodashi or Dhanteras, Narak-chaturdashi, Lakshmi-Poojan, Bali-Pratipada and Bhai-

Duj. Each day has its own importance. Though there are numerous legend associated with all 5 days, we shall see the most recognized ones.

Slaying of the demon Narakasura by Lord Krishna is the most recognized legend for the second day of Deepavali. With the help of Narakasura's own mother - Bhudevi, Lord Krishna killed him on this second day of Deepavali. Bhudevi Herself requested Lord Krishna that this day be celebrated as one of jubiliations. Lord Krishna granted Her request and since then the tradition has continued. Bhudevi reconciled Herself to the loss of Her son as She knew that Her son was killed for the welfare of world. Thus She set a glowing example of how one has to brush aside one's personal joys and sorrows in the interest of society.

After the slaying of Narakaasura, Lord Krishna bathed Himself smearing his body with oil in the early morning of Chaturdashi. That is why it is a custom to be followed on Deepavali to get up early in the morning, massage the body with a mixture of oil, flour and haldi (turmeric) before the daily bath.

The third day of Deepavali is the new moon day, auspicious for offering prayers and gratitude to the bygone ancestors of the family and invoking their memories and blessings for treading the path of right conduct. This is also the sacred occasion for the worship of Lakshmi, the goddess of Wealth and Prosperity. The business community open their New Year's account with Her worship. It is believed that Goddess Lakshmi visits everybody's house. People keep their houses clean and light lamps to welcome Goddess Lakshmi. Lakshmi-Pooja is performed on this very day. It is believed that on this auspicious day Lord Krishna discarded his body.



The next day of Deepavali is Bali-pratipada. Bali Pratipada or Padwa is a symbol of love and devotion between the wife and husband. On this day newly married daughters with their husbands are invited for special meals and given presents. This auspicious day is also considered as a beginning of new year according to one Hindu calendar. Therefore, on this day, new ventures are begun, house-warming poojas are performed, and people also may choose to

buy gold, silver or property on this day.

There are some legends associated with this day. It is said that Lord Brahma created the Universe on this day. On this very day, Lord Vishnu, incarnated in the form of a dwarfish Brahmin by name Vamana and punished the demon king Bali. It is also believed that on this day, Lord Rama returned to Ayodhya victorious after killing the demon king Ravana. This is also the day for Govardhana Pooja and Anna Koota (heap of grains), the former signifying the Govardhana episode in Sri Krishna's life and the latter conveying affluence and prosperity.



The last day of Deepavali is Bhai-duj. It is primarily a day of brother and sister. It is a most touching moment for the family members when even distant brothers reach their sisters to strengthen that holy tie. The sister applies tilak and waves aarati to her brother, wishes him a long & healthy life and offers him sweets with warmth and the brother offers loving presents to the sister. Those who do not have a brother perform a sort of puja to the Moon-God.



There is one more episode associated with Deepavali which is the great event of Mahaaveera attaining the Eternal Bliss of Nirvaana. The passing into Eternity on the same day of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, that lionine sanyasin who was one of the first to light the torch of Hindu Renaissance during the last century, and of Swami Ramatirtha who carried the fragrance of the spiritual message of Hindu Dharma to the western world, have brought the spiritual tradition of Deepavali right up to modern times.





Story of Guru Nanak Devji

Whenever there is decline of righteousness, whenever there is oppression and chaos in the land, whenever the faith of the people in God wanes, great men or saints appear from time to time to enrich sacred literature, to protect Dharma, to destroy unrighteousness and reawaken the love of God in the minds of the people. It was the time when Bharat (Indian continent) was invaded and ruled by foreign invaders. There was wholesale massacre everywhere; the kings were cruel and tyrannical and the people were cunning, selfish and greedy. There was religious persecution. The real spirit of dharma was crushed by ritualism. At such a time, Guru Nanank came to the world with a message of peace, unity, love and devotion to God. Nanak was born in 1469 in the Punjab province of Bharat (India). His father, Kalu, was an agriculturist and accountant of the village.

Soon Nanak started going to school. But he was really not interested in gaining materialistic knowledge. His teacher, Gopal Pandha, insisted him to learn mathematics and accounts. He asked Gopal Pandha, “what is the extent of your knowledge? Does it help me to obtain salvation?” Gopal Pandha was struck with wonder. He could not give any satisfactory answer to Nanak’s question. But Nanak learnt mathematics and accounts anyway!

Nanak would not chant anything without understanding it’s meaning. Once his sanskrit teacher, Pandit Brij Nath, asked him to write and chant – OM. Nanak asked him first, “Guruji! What is the meaning of OM? You did not teach me the meaning yet. How can I chant it if I don’t know the meaning?” Teacher Pandit Brij Nath was very astonished at his words and a also little angry. He himself did not know the meaning of OM. Then Nanak replied, “let me explain you the meaning” and he himself explained Pandit Brij Nath the meaning of OM.

Nanak had a mystic disposition since childhood. He had a contemplative

mind and a pious nature. One day, when Nanak was fifteen years of age, his father Kalu gave him twenty rupees (Indian currency) and said, “Nanak, go to the market and purchase some profitable commodity”. Kalu sent his servant Bala also to accompany Nanak. Nanak and Bala, while going to market, met a party of Sadhus (saints). Nanak thought: “Let me feed these Sadhus now. This is the most profitable bargain I can make”. He purchased provisions immediately and fed them sumptuously. Then he came back to his house. The servant Bala informed his master of his son’s bargain. Kalu was very much annoyed. He gave a slap on Nanak’s face. The father thought that Nanak did not like sedentary work. Therefore he said to Nanak, “O dear son! Ride on a horse and do travelling business. This will suit you nicely”. Nanak replied, “Revered father! My trade is divine knowledge. The profits are the purseful of good deeds with which I can certainly reach the domain of the Lord”. This event indicates Nanak’s divine nature and inclination towards God. Nanak began to spend his time in meditation and spiritual practices.

Nanak got married to Sulakhani. He had two sons. Nanak discharged his duties very satisfactorily. He spent a small portion of his earnings for his own maintenance and distributed the rest to the poor. Even after the marriage, he continued practicing severe austerities and intense meditation. He used to go to the forest and lonely places for his meditation.

Nanak became a public preacher at the age of thirty-four. He began to preach his mission through his songs and bhajans. When Nanak sang songs, his faithful servant Mardana used to accompany him on the rebeck. Nanak and his servant Mardana wandered from place to place to carry the message of peace and love for everybody. He preached the universal brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God to all people. He asked people to take God’s name with every



breath. Nanak was a reformer too. He attacked the corruptions in society. He strongly protested against formalism and ritualism. He said, “Ritualism is not necessary while worshipping god”. His preaching produced a deep impression on the minds of the public. Soon people started calling him – Guru Nanak!.

Guru Nanak’s songs are collected and preserved in the Granth Sahib or Adi Granth—the sacred book of the Sikh community. This book is in Gurumukhi language. Guru Nanak invented the Gurumukhi characters by simplifying the Sanskrit characters. The compositions of Guru Nanak are extensively described in this Granth Sahib Book. The Granth Sahib begins with the following: “There is but one God whose name is true—the Creator”. It contains a code of high morals. Purity of life, obedience to Guru, mercy, charity, temperance, justice, straightforwardness, truthfulness, sacrifice, service, love and abstinence from animal food are among the virtues on which great emphasis is laid; while lust, anger, pride, hatred, egoism, greed, selfishness, cruelty, backbiting and falsehood are vehemently condemned.



Guru Nanak lived in this world for sixty nine years. He spent all his life in worshipping god and preaching people. Because of his rigorous meditation in order to realise God quickly, he became weak and sick. He felt that his time had come! He gave up food He became wholly absorbed in divine contemplation. He observed perfect silence and at the age of sixty nine, took his last breath.





Goddesses

In Hindu culture, all animals that are nurturing are given a feminine relation. For example, a cow in Hindu Dharma is considered like mother, for she gives us her milk, cheese and so many other edibles. Another example could be the Earth. Earth provides us with all basic needs of life like food and water. Therefore, Hindus call her Mother Earth.

Likewise, Hindus believe that gods have a gentle and nurturing side that can be portrayed by a feminine form, a Goddess. Hence, for every God there is an equal Goddess. One can see it as two sides to the same coin. These Goddesses are not wives of a God, but rather a part of him. In this way, one can say that Vishnu is Lakshmi and Lakshmi is Vishnu.

But just as a God represents certain virtues or characteristics, the Goddess, also, stands for complementary traits. This could be a way of making sure that every God is all rounded. For example, in order for you to have a 4.0 G.P.A, you must excel in all your classes. Not, just in those that are your personal favorites. In the same manner, Hindu Dharma makes sure that their Gods are well rounded by giving them both male and female sides. Let's take a look at some of these Goddesses.

Saraswati

Sitting elegantly on a lotus, is the fair-skinned eternally young and tall Goddess, Saraswati. She is usually shown playing a stringed instrument known as the veena, which is believed to be invented by Saraswati herself. In another hand, Saraswati is holding a book of palm leaves, which shows her love of learning.

She is considered mother of the language Sanskrit and originator of the Devnagari script in which most Indian languages are written. Saraswati symbolizes the power of knowledge. She is also the benefactor of arts, sciences and speech. There are mantras written in hopes that



Saraswati will help to rid one of his laziness and ignorance.

Since Brahma's function is to create the universe, the worlds and everything within, Saraswati is representative of the knowledge he needs to complete his task. Suppose you are doing a project called Project Y, then you must first research about it. All the data you collect, you will label as Research X. Now, without Research X your project is impossible to finish. And Research X cannot be turned in on it's own, it has to be shown as a part of your entire Project Y. Therefore, when you finally show your teacher the entire project, he will only see your completed Project Y. But you will know that Project Y would not be complete if it wasn't supported by your Research X.

In this same way Brahma is representative of the creation of the entire universe and Saraswati is representative of the knowledge needed to do so. Without Saraswati, Brahma can not complete his job and without Brahma, Swaraswati can not be of use.

Lakshmi

Lakshmi is shown as young and beautiful, jewels and garments adorning her. Her four hands symbolize the four ends of human life – Dharma (righteousness), Kama (desires), Artha (wealth) and Moksha (liberation from cycle of birth and death). Through one of her four hands, falls a constant stream of gold coins. This represents the power of wealth, which Vishnu needs to pervade and maintain the universe. This is much like keeping a car maintained with the latest equipment or it will be of no use after a few years.

Many merchants and tradesman pray to Lakshmi on a daily basis, wishing for a prosperous day of sales. For Lakshmi does represent beauty, purity and fertility, as well as, power of wealth.

Lakshmi is also known as the universal female, for she has incarnated as many times a Vishnu, being his perfect equal. She was Kamla when Vishnu was the dwarf Vaman and she was Rukmani when Vishnu was Krishna. Though her most influential incarnation was that of Sita, the ideal woman.



Parvati

Many a times, a Goddess herself can manifest in to different forms to serve different purposes and so people know one goddess by various names. This is true for the Goddess Parvati, who can also be Durga or Kali. She can be both friendly, as Parvati, and powerful, as Kali and Durga.

In the form of Parvati, she is complementary to a meditating and peaceful Shiva. Parvati herself has done rigorous meditation and penance by which she went from being a the daughter of the mountain king, Parvatraj to being the companion of Shiva. Ganesh was also created by Paravati from her own body after doing much meditation. Hence, Parvati is representative of the power of meditation.

As Durga and Kali, the goddess becomes ever powerful, residing on a lion with eight arms. These arms stand for health, education, wealth, organization, unity, fame, courage and truth. She holds a weapon in each hand for the destruction of evil and the protection of good, represented by the lotus. Many times Kali is shown in a fierce form, with dark skin. This form resembles the extreme power of shakti (energy). Like Durga, the goddess Kali is worshiped as the devourer of all evil. It is said that Shiva is nothing but a corpse without Kali. Hence Kali is an essential part of Shiva.

Now, anyone to see that the Goddesses in Hindu Dharma are just as powerful and important as the Gods themselves. They each bring knowledge, power and truth that helps to keep the circle of creation going. No other religion can pride itself by saying that their God is both male and female, hence not partial to any one gender.

This belief can even be seen in Hindu culture, where one believes that their daughter is a form of Lakshmi and all mothers are treated with much respect and dignity.



-: Exercise :-

Match the Pairs

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) Saraswati | 1) Dhanatrayodashi or Dhanteras |
| 2) Lakshmi | 2) Narak-Chaturdashi |
| 3) Parvati (Durga) | 3) Lakshmi Poojan |
| 4) First Day of Deepvali | 4) Bhai-Dooj |
| 5) Second Day of Deepavali | 5) Goddess of Strength |
| 6) Third Day of Deepavali | 6) Goddess of Wealth |
| 7) Fifth Day of Deepavali | 7) Goddess of Knowledge |

Fill up the blanks

- 1) Hindu people consider Earth as _____.
a) Father b) Mother c) Sister d) Shiva
- 2) Vishnu needs _____ to pervade and maintain the Universe.
a) Lakshmi b) Parvati c) Saraswati d) None of these
- 3) _____ is festival of lights.
a) Navaratri b) Samkranti c) Deepavali d) None of these
- 4) The fourth day of Deepavali is _____.
a) Bhai-Dooj b) Bali-pratipada c) Lakshmi pooja d) None of these
- 5) _____ spent all his life in worshipping God and preaching people.
a) Birju b) Guru Nanak c) Mardana d) None of these
- 6) Compositions of Guru Nanak are described in the book _____.
a) Ramayan b) Gita c) Granth Sahib d) None of these
- 7) _____ was Guru Nanakji's faithful servant and follower.
a) Mardana b) Bhima c) Keshav d) None of these

Questions

1) Write the fourth staza of the geet?

2) What are the five days of Deepavali? Describe them briefly.

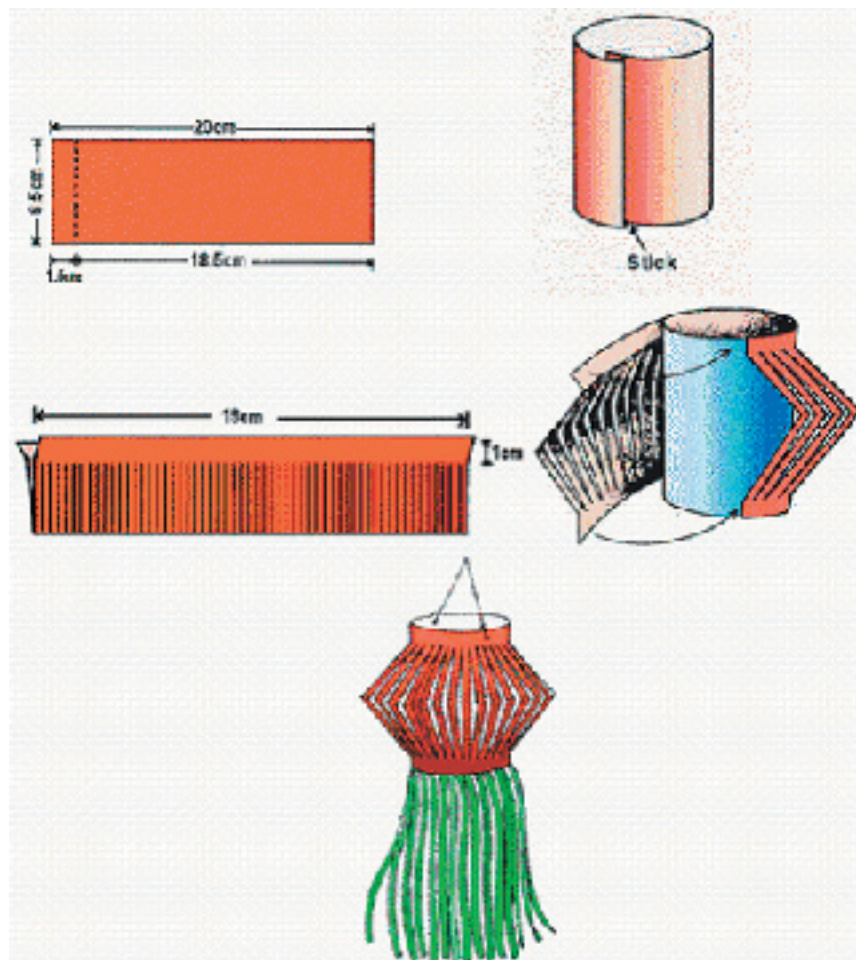
3) What does Goddess mean? Describe briefly Goddesses - Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati.

4) Describe Guru Nanak Devji's teachings briefly?

Make your own Aakash Diya (Kandil)

“Aakash Diya (kandil)” is a decorative colored paper lamp light. It is hung above the houses, temples and all places of worship during the Deepavali festival as Deepavali is a festival of lights. Readymade “Aakash Diya” can be bought from the market. You can make your own Aakash Diya too. It is very easy and fun to make! Follow simple instructions given below. Use colors of your choice to make the Diya look the way you want it to.

Form a roll with a sheet of cardboard 20cm x 6.5cm. Take a colored tinted paper 19cm x 8.5cm and fold it in half. Make parallel cuts at a distance of about 0.4cm as shown, leaving a margin of 1cm. Now unfold and paste the margins along the upper and the lower edges of the cylinder. For extra decoration, cut a sheet of thin colored paper 19cm x 19cm, as shown, leaving a margin of 1cm. Stick it along the lower edge of the lantern.



Shloka

ॐ (Om)

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदम्
 पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
 पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ।

om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidam
 pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate |
 pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya
 pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate |

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥ om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ||

OM! That is full. This is full. From that full, this full has come; when this Full is taken from that Full it always remains Full! Om Peace, Peace, Peace!

श्री कृष्ण (śrī kṛṣṇa)

आकाशात् पतितं तोयं
 यथा गच्छति सागरम् ।
 सर्वदेवनमस्कारः केशवं
 प्रतिगच्छति ॥

ākāśāt patitaṁ toyam
 yathā gacchati sāgaram |
 sarvadevanamaskāraḥ keśavam
 pratigacchati ||

Just as every drop of rain that falls from the sky flows into the Ocean, in the same way all prayers offered to any Deity goes to Bhagawan Krishna

(Bhagvan Vishnu).

Subhashitam

दम्भो दर्पोऽभिमानश्च क्रोधः पारुष्यमेव च ।
अज्ञानं चाभिजातस्य पार्थ सम्पदमासुरीम् ॥

dambho darpo.abhimAnashca krodhaH pAruShyameva ca |
aGYAnaM cAbhijAtasya pArtha sampadamAsurIm ||

Hypocrisy, arrogance, pride, anger, harshness and ignorance;
these are the marks of those who are born with demonic qualities,
O Arjuna.

Amrutvachan



If there is one word that you find coming out like a bomb from the Upanishads, bursting like a bombshell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word, fearlessness. And the only religion that ought to be taught is the religion of fearlessness. Either in this world or in the world of religion, it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil.

- Swami Vivekananda

Geet

Shata naman Madhav charan me

Shata naman Madhav charan me

Aap ki piyush vaani. shabda ko bhi dhanya karati.
Aap ki aatmiyataa jo, yugal nayano se barasati,
Aur vah nishchhal hasi jo, gunj uthati thi gagan me || 1 ||

Gyan me to aap rishiwar, deekhate the aadya Shankar,
Aur bhola bhav shishu saa, khelataa mukha par nirantar,
Deen dukhiyo ke liye thi, dravit karunaa dhaar mana me || 2 ||

Dukkha sukha nindaa prashansaa, aap ko sab ek hi the,
Divya Gita gyan se yuta, aap to sthita pragnya hi the,
Bharatbhu ke putra uttam, aap the yugpurosh janame || 3 ||

Sindhu saa gambhir manas, thaaha kab payi kisi ne,
Aa gaya samparka me jo, dhanyataa paayi usi ne,
Aap yogeshwar naye the, chhal bhare kurukshetra rann me || 4 ||

Meaning

Oh I Madhava we bow before you...

Your sweet words give real meaning to words themselves. Your kindness pours down from your eyes. Your innocent laugh echoes from the skies.

Your intelligence is like that of an ancient sage you appear like Adi Shankaracharya. While your face always reveals childlike innocence and your eyes are always filled up with tears for the down trodden

Everything is equal to you may it be joy or grief, praise or no praise. You are always like sthita pragnya described in Gita. You were the great son of this land and born here as her greatest son.

Your mind appears like the ocean, deep and quiet. Everybody gets blessings whosoever comes in contact with you. You are like Lord Yogeshwar (Krishna) promising to Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra.



Overview of Sangh Utsavs

In our Balagokulam (Sangh), we celebrate (conduct) six utsavs (festivals). These six utsavs are Varsha Pratipada, Hindu Samrajya Divas, Guru Poornima, Raksha Bandhan, Vijaya Dashami and Makar Samkranti. While there are numerous festivals in Hindu Dharma, one may wonder, “why does the Sangh celebrate these six utsavs in Balagokulam? Why not others?”. The answer is very simple. All these utsavs give emphasis on social harmony and unity which is the need of hour.

Generally Hindus are very religious on an individual level. They regularly visit temples and perform all kinds of rituals. But the history witnesses that there has always been a lack of unity amongst Hindus on society level and social harmony amongst all sectors of Hindu Dharma. Perhaps this is one of the many reasons behind the downfall of Hindu Dharma. Though Hindu Dharma has all qualities to become a “Vishwa Dharma” (Universal Religion), Hindu People can not propagate this thought because of lack of unity and strength. It is commonly seen that world listens to those who have power (strength) and power does not come without organized people. That is why Sangh focusses on celebrating these utsavs. In previous chapters, these utsavs are already described at length. Let us try to summarize them here.

VARSHA PRATIPADA

Varsha Pratipada is the first day of the year according to the Hindu Calendar (in some parts, the Shalivahana Shaka and in the rest, the Vikrama Samvat - corresponding to the era beginning 78 A.D. and 57 B.C. respectively), and is significant both for its historical importance and for the advent of bountiful nature. This day is also known as Yugadi. Yugadi means “Beginning of New age” (Yuga=Age and Aadi=beginning). The day falls in the beginning of

Spring - Vasanta Ritu - When the Goddess of Nature gets bedecked as a divine bride. The day aptly carries the assurance to human life, "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind"? It fills the human spirit with optimism and hope about one's future and injects into him courage and confidence in facing the trials and tribulations of life - both individual and social. We celebrate the Varsha Pratipada day because it marks the emergence of victorious Hindu Society after great struggles. This day reminds us of the great man, Dr. Hedgewar, who made our society strong by organizing it, as it happens to be his birthday.

HINDU SAMRAJYA DIVAS

This day commemorates the coronation of Chhatrapati Shri Shivaji Maharaja in 1674 AD Maharashtra province of Bharat. The contribution of Shivaji marked the end of Moghul rule and re-established the Hindu Nation. Before the rise of Shivaji, it was a very common saying that Hindu People can not be united and they can not have their own kingdom. But Shivaji not only united common Hindu people, but also encouraged them to fight against the enemies of Bharat and established an independent Hindu Kingdom. The day symbolises that unity is strength.

GURU POORNIMA

Devotional worship of the guru is one of the most touching and elevating features of the Hindu cultural tradition. The relationship of Guru-shishya is one unique symbol of our Hindu Dharma. The sacred Bhagwa Dhvaj has been handed down through the ages by Sanyasins and Emperors to represent the greatest unifying symbol of the entire Hindu Samaj. In Sangh, we too have placed this flag as our Guru and guide. On this day we offer our sincere respects to our guru, Bhagwa Dhvaj, by way of Dakshina. Dakshina is the time, effort and money given in support/service of the Sangh work.

RAKSHA BANDHAN

Commonly the tying of Rakhi symbolises the love and bond of protection between brother and sister. But Sangh has given a new dimension to this festival. Now the rakhi is tied to all Hindus to symbolise the bond of protection between the individual and Society. We take an inner vow to serve and protect

the Hindu Society. In Balagokulam, the Rakhi is first tied to the Bhagwa Dhwaj and then to all the swayamsevaks and sevikas. This helps to promote and preserve our tradition and strengthen the bond between individuals and Hindu society. After the utsav, swayamsevaks and sevikas go to public places and tie rakhi to individuals. This helps to preserve harmony amongst all people regardless of their faith, and promote world peace.

VIJAYA DASHMI

Vijaya (victory) Dashmi (tenth day) comes as the finale to the nine days of festival of Navratri. Lord Rama defeated Ravana on this day so it signifies the victory of the forces of righteousness over evil. We celebrate this utsav in Sangh because we have to learn that only the strongest and the fittest will survive and that we want to bring others with us so that they will also be strong and proud Hindus. All good tasks are initiated on this day. Another most important thing about this day is that RSS, which is the source of inspiration for HSS, was started on this day.

MAKAR SANKRANTI

This day marks the commencement of the Sun's northern course when it enters the sign of Makar or Capricorn. This day, according to the solar calendar, is always on 14th January. From this day the duration of the day increases and the nights become shorter. On a personal level, it marks the introspection of one's self and resolve in the coming year. In Shakha the new Adhikari gana is initiated and the utsav is rounded off with Til-Gud sweet.

The above paragraphs briefly describe the significance of 6 Sangh Utsavs and why Sangh (Balagokulam) gives more focus on celebrating these utsavs. Does it mean that we should celebrate only these 6 utsavs in balagokulam and not others? The answer is – No. The Sangh celebrates (conducts) these utsavs as a common minimum program. On top it, any number of utsavs can be celebrated in our Balagokulam.





Gita Jayanti

Gita Jayanti marks one of the greatest days in the history of mankind. This festival is celebrated in the month of December-January. A sanskrit word “Jayanti” pertains to birthday and Gita pertains to Bhagvad-Gita – preaching delivered by lord Krishna on the battle-field of Kurukshetra. Thus “Gita Jayanti” is the birthday of Bhagvad Gita. According to Hindu Panchang (calendar), it is celebrated on the 11th day (Ekadashi) of the bright half of the month Margaseersha. Now let us try to explore the background of Bhagvad Gita.

Mahabharata is the greatest epic of mankind and Gita is a part of Mahabharata. The main story of Mahabharata is the war between two branches of the royal family of the great kingdom Hastinapur in Bharat – The Kauravas and The Pandavas. Kauravas were the hundred sons of King Dhritarashtra led by their eldest brother Duryodhana and Pandavas were the sons of Pandu (younger brother of King Dhritarashtra) led by their eldest brother Yudhishtira.

The Pandavas had been cheated by the Kauravas in a game of dice. According to rules, they had to give up kingdom and go in exile for thirteen years. After spending thirteen years in exile, the Pandavas came back and asked the Kauravas for their kingdom, but the Kauravas, particularly Duryodhana bluntly refused to give them anything. They even refused to give them 5 villages. As a final gesture, The Pandavas sent his friend Krishna to make a final bid for peace and justice. But Duryodhana refused Krishna too, thereby defying God himself. He even challenged the Pandavas and Krishna to fight. Now the war was inevitable. Great kings and emperors around the world either joined the Kauravas side or the Pandavas side, thereby causing a world-war.

On the Pandavas side, Arjuna was a key warrior. Krishna accepted to be his charioteer. In the beginning of war, Arjuna got very much depressed. Throwing his weapons away, he began dialogue with Krishna, “Why should I fight with my own people? My opponents are my cousins, my Gurus and

people honorable to me. Why should I fight with them? I can not use my weapon against my own people”. Krishna tried to persuade and make him ready to fight. While convincing, Krishna enlightened him with a great knowledge of Vedas and Upanishads. This convincing of Krishna is Bhagvad-Gita. Bhagvad Gita is the only scripture that was taught in the battlefield. That’s why it relates so much to all of us. Arjuna was a man of action and not a renounced person sitting in the Himalayas.



Gita is later presented in the form of a scripture or book. But it is not merely a book. It is a living voice of the Supreme - God carrying an eternally vital and indispensable message to mankind. It is a source of power and wisdom. It strengthens you when you are weak and inspires you when you are feeble. It contains the message of life that appeals to all, irrespective of race, creed, age or religion. It teaches us how to live a righteous life, how to make conscious choice to act according to Dharma, while performing all our day-to-day duties.

Let us try to recite following shloka which is most recognized shloka from Bhagvad Gita.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

yadA yadA hi dharmasya glAnirbhavati bhArata |

abhyutthAnamadharmasya tadA.a.atmAnaM sR^iujAmyaham | |

Meaning: (O Arjuna !), whenever there is a decline of righteousness and predominant rise in unrighteousness, then I manifest myself.





IDEAL HINDU HOME

Background

We all spend a significant part of our lives at home. It is where individuals come together to form a family. The values (sanskars) that are practiced in a family greatly influence the character and quality of the family members, especially those of children. A cohesive, loving, and harmonious home helps create compassionate, caring and responsible individuals. A dysfunctional home tends to create individuals of undesirable qualities that become a burden on society.

In earlier times, most Hindus lived in joint or extended families. That is, it was not just parents and their young children under a roof, but grand parents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces, etc living together. The head of the family, as well as every member of the extended family considered the entire family their very own. For the well being of the entire unit, they learnt to curtail their individual desires and to behave in a manner that brought harmony to the family, and happiness to every member. Older family members lead by example, the younger ones respected them, and looked up to them as role models. As children grew up, they were surrounded by good sanskars in a very natural way. Today, such extended families are becoming rare, and one has to consciously learn about what constitutes an Ideal Hindu Home.

There are certain external or physical characteristics and some internal or behavioral characteristics of an Ideal Hindu Home. Let us understand some of these in greater detail.

Physical characteristics of an Ideal Hindu Home

Cleanliness: A clean, organized house provides a healthy setting from which to grow and mature – physically, emotionally, and spiritually. A dirty and cluttered house is not conducive for a healthy and happy life. There is

a saying that God lives in a clean house only. No matter how luxurious or simple your house is, keep it clean.

Place for worship / meditation: An Ideal Hindu Home should have a separate area for worship / meditation. Pictures of Gods, photos of ancestors, a lamp, incense sticks, religious books, etc are usually kept in this room. Each morning after shower, and once in the evening, spend a few minutes here, chant a few shlokas you know, and focus your mind on prayer. Learn to meditate.

Displaying Hindu symbols: Where appropriate throughout the house, display Hindu symbols such as Om, Swastika, Bhagwa Dhvaj, pictures of holy places, spiritual personalities, etc. These will constantly remind you of your hoary heritage, and serve as an inspiration to live as an ideal Hindu.

Celebrating festivals: Become educated on reading a Hindu calendar, and be aware of when festivals occur. Continue to celebrate festivals that are customary in your family. Learn why and how the festival is celebrated, including the rituals associated with it. These practices may have been passed on for several generations in your family, and you want to be sure to pass them on to your future generations. Share the happiness of the occasion by calling your friends and family to greet them, or visit them if possible. Contemplate the social aspect of the festival, and act (such as giving money for charity, doing social work, etc). Celebrate birthdays through Hindu traditions.

Language, Music and Arts: Someone once said “If you want to destroy a culture, destroy the language”. Language, music and arts are key things that form the basis of a civilization and culture. These too have been passed on through generations, so at home make every effort to preserve and practice them. Learn to speak, read and write in your mother tongue. Learn one or more Hindu arts (such as dancing, singing, rangoli, mehendi, etc), and when proficient, teach to others. The personal satisfaction in being good in language and arts, as well as the gratification in preserving and promoting them is invaluable.

Behavioral characteristics of an Ideal Hindu Home

Respect for parents and elders: Show respect to your parents and elders in deed and in words. If you have to disagree with them, do so in a way that is not hurtful or offensive. Remind yourself that your parent will never

intentionally do or ask you do anything that would be detrimental to you. Also be reverential to your forefathers.

Doing things together: Doing things together truly bonds the family, and develops mutual understanding, love, and confidence among the family members. Consider doing a collective evening prayer and Arti, having at least one meal together everyday, etc. Once a week, sit down together to discuss rituals, traditions, or just tell stories.

Getting up early: Early morning is called 'Brahma Muhurt' by Hindus and is considered a very auspicious time to do things. Modern science has also confirmed the varied physical and imotional benefits of getting up early (and consequently going to bed early). In practical terms, you will realize that you can get a lot more accomplished when your body and mind are rested and alert.

Avoiding waste: There's a Hindu saying: "Mother Earth has enough to provide us with all our need, but not all our greed". Be very mindful of what is consumed, and what is wasted. Water, food, all forms of energy, paper, etc are all precious resources that we should conserve as much as possible. By extension, try to avoid buying things on impulse; buy only what you have identified as truly needed after considerable thought. Avoid an ostentatious lifestyle – live frugally and learn to enjoy the pleasure in giving.

Being a role model: Practice the above, educate yourself on Hinduism, and resolve to be socially active. Try to do everything to the best of your ability. These will make you a role model for others to emulate. To create such individuals is the goal of an Ideal Hindu Home.



-: Exercise :-

Match the Pairs

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1) Shata Naman | 1) Vijayadashami |
| 2) Sangh utsav | 2) pertains to birth day |
| 3) Brahma Muhurt | 3) Madhav Charan me |
| 4) Yada yada hi dharmasya | 4) 11th day |
| 5) aap ki piyush vaani | 5) Early morning |
| 6) Jayanti | 6) shabda ko bhi dhanya karati |
| 7) Ekadashi | 7) Gita shloka |

Fill up the blanks

- 1) _____ is the greatest epic of mankind.
a) Ramayana b) Gita c) Veda d) Mahabharata
- 2) _____ is an essence of the Vedas and Upanishadas.
a) Gita b) Ramayan c) Mahabharata d) None of these
- 3) _____ is a birth day of Bhagvad-Gita.
a) Deepavali b) Navaratri c) Gita-Jayanti d) None of these
- 4) _____ is the only scripture that was taught in the battlefield.
a) Ramayana b) Mahabharata c) Gita d) None of these
- 5) _____ is essentially a Hindu art.
a) Rangoli b) Gambling c) Drinking d) None of these
- 6) Celebrating _____ is a characteristic of an ideal Hindu home.
a) festivals b) birth days c) anniversary d) None of these
- 7) This month's "Amrutvachan" belongs to _____.
a) Doctorji b) Guruji c) Vivekananda d) None of these

Questions

1) Write the first stanza of the Geet.

2) Sangh gives focus on which 6 festivals (utsavs)? Why?

3) Describe any two characteristics of an Ideal Hindu Home.

Aakash Diya (kandil) for coloring

