



# Syllabus

Year I, Quarter III

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. Bala-Gokulam 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)**

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## Shloka

गुरु वन्दना (Salutations to Guru)

गुरुब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः	gururbrahmā gururviṣṇuḥ
गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।	gururdevo maheśvaraḥ
गुरुः साक्षात् परब्रह्म	guruḥ sāksāt parabrahma
तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥	tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ

My salutations to Guru, who is Brahma, who is also Vishnu, and who is also Maheshvara. Guru is none other than the all-pervading supreme Self.

ध्यानमूलं गुरोर्मूर्तिः	Dhyaana-mulam guormurtih
पूजामूलं गुरोः पदम् ।	pujaamulam guroh padam
मन्त्रमूलं गुरोर्वाक्यं	mantramulam gurorvaakyam
मोक्षमूलं गुरोः कृपा ॥	mokshamulam guroh krpaa

The basis of meditation is guru's murti; the support of worship is guru's feet; the origin of mantra is guru's word; the cause of liberation is guru's blessings.

## Subhashitam

सुखार्थी त्यजते विद्यां विद्यार्थी त्यजते सुखम् ।  
सुखार्थिनः कुतो विद्या कुतो विद्यार्थिनः सुखम् ॥

The one who runs after the luxuries will not get knowledge. And the one who wants to gain knowledge leaves the luxuries. How will any one get knowledge if he/she wants to lead a easy life? And how will one get to live a easy life who is looking for knowledge?

Knowledge cannot be gained leading a lavish life-style. In ancient Bharat the 'Gurukula' system was designed in such a way that students in their student life should gain maximum knowledge by staying away from all the pleasures of the materialistic world.

## Amrutvachan



Education should be Man-Making education. A negative education or any training that is based on negation, is worse than death. It should be able to create Shradha in the student to all life (parents, society, nation etc). Education is not the amount of information that is put into a brain and runs riot there, undigested, all life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas. Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.

- Swami Vivekananda

# Geet

## BAAL HAI GOPAL HAI

Baal Hai Gopal Hai, Hum Dharma Ke Bhaal Hai  
Hum Dharma Ke Bhaal Hai

Poorshottam Maryaadaa Dhaaree, Dwaapar-men Hum Krushana Muraaree  
Har Yuga Men Kar Dharma Dhawajaa Le, Vaijayntee Gal Maal Hai...  
Bal Hai Gopall Hai...(1)

Veer Shivaa Ranaa Abhimaanee, Guru Govind Sinha Theh Balidaanee  
Bandaa Vairaagee Jaisn Ke, Tejasvee Hum Laal Hai...  
Bal Hai Gopal Hai...(2)

Naana Taatyaa Raanee Jansi, Pralayankar Ban Chumee Phaanssee  
Pandey Mangal Kukaa Phadake, Dhadhak Uthay Ve Jwaal Hai...  
Bal Hai Gopal Hai...(3)

Dayanand Aravind Vivekaa, Eka Tatvake Roop Aneko  
Divya Jyoti Keshava Maadhava Ki, Sampaadita Har Praana Hai...  
Bal Hai Gopal Hai...(4)

## Meaning

Our baal are the Gopal and the armoury of Dharma (Duty to uphold righteousness).

In Treta-yuga the magnificent complete being was baal Raam and in Dwaapar-yuga was baal Krishna. In every yuga, the establishing of the victory flag of dharma is the precious wealth we give.

The brave Shivaji and Rana are our pride and Guru Govind singh was a great martyr. Like Banda Vairagee, our bravery shines magnificently.

Naana, Taatyaa and Queen of Jansi met death in the flames of fire. Our rage cannot be controlled as the flames rise high.

Dayaanand, Aravindo and Vivekanand all had the same vision but with variation only in approach. The bright light given by Keshav (PP Doctorji) and Madhav (PP Guruji) is present in everyone of us.



## Guru Poornima

The full moon day of the month of Ashadha (July-August) is traditionally celebrated as Guru Poornima. Guru means teacher and Poornima means the full moon day of the month. This day is also known as Vyasa Poornima. The great sage Vyasa classified the accumulated spiritual knowledge of the Vedas under four heads - Rig, Yajur, Saama and Atharva. He also composed the authentic treatise of Brahma-sootras to explain the background of Vedas. He also wrote the eighteen Puranas, the stories of our great heroes and saints, to carry the spiritual and moral teachings contained therein to the common masses. Therefore he is the Adi-Guru for all people.

How does this Sanskrit word (Guru) come from? ‘Gu’ stands for Gunatheeta (attributeless) and ‘Ru’ signifies Rupavarjita (formless). Thus, the one, who is formless and attributeless, is the true Guru. God!! The Guru helps us to give up the ignorance, light the lamp of wisdom and ultimately merge in the Divine. It is very well expressed in the one of the verses of Hindu scriptures.

Gurubrahma Guruvishnu Gururdevo Maheshwaraha |

Guruhu sakshaat Parambrahman tasmai Shrigurave namaha ||

(Guru is Brahma... Guru is Vishnu.... Guru is Mahesh (Shiva). The Guru is Parambrahman (God). Thus respect Guru)

There is also another interpretation of Guru. The “Gu” means darkness or ignorance. “Ru” denotes the remover of that darkness. Therefore one who removes darkness of our ignorance is a Guru. A Guru also inspires and guides us on to the path of God-realization. In other words, Guru is the one who gives us knowledge. Thus mother is considered as the first Guru (teacher). But we acquire knowledge from others too such as School Teacher, College Lecturer, or our Coach or even the Shikshak at our Balagokulam. Thus they are also referred as Guru. One should always be thankful to whom he or she gains knowledge.

In Hindu tradition, the Guru is looked upon as an embodiment of God himself. It is through his grace and guidance that one reaches the highest



state of wisdom and bliss. The Guru or teacher also guides us into the right path when we lose track. Guru also boosts our energy when we run out of steam. On this auspicious day of Guru Poornima, many disciples perform a puja of their respective spiritual preceptor (Guru). One may even celebrate in silence, reading the religious scriptures. The best form of worshiping Guru is to follow his teachings, remember/implement them and propagate them.

In our Balagokulams we have considered sacred Bhagava Dhvaj (saffron flag) as the true Guru. Why is that? Why don't we consider an individual as a Guru? There have been various sages (saints), teachers and spiritual leaders who have been teaching countless individuals. But, is there any one who can be looked upon as the preceptor for the entire Hindu people - for all their past, present and future generations? Obviously, no individual can play that role. A human being is after all mortal and, however great, has its own limitations. He cannot be a permanent guide for all time to come. But there is one who can be a permanent guide to all for all the time! Sacred Bhagava Dhvaj (saffron flag)!! The sacred Bhagava Dhvaj that represents all the Gurus, is worshipped as the Guru of the entire Hindu society. That is why we consider Bhagava Dhvaj as a Guru in our Balagokulams.

Bhagava Dhvaj is as ancient as the Hindu people themselves. It has flown over the hermitages of the seers and sanyaasins and also over the celestial palaces of emperors. It has flown triumphantly over the battlefields of freedom struggle and has symbolized the immortal spirit of freedom in the Hindu mind. It is the one supreme symbol held in universal reverence by all sects and castes, and all creeds and faiths of the Hindu people. It is in fact the greatest unifying symbol of the entire Hindu world.

The color of the Bhagava Dhvaj - the saffron, depicts sacrifice and service. The flames rising from the yajna are saffron in color and indeed reflect this spirit.

The annual function of Sri Guru Pooja in our Balagokulams presents a moment of introspection for us to check up how far we have progressed in this path of renunciation and selfless service to the society over the last one year, and take lessons from it and resolve to march faster in the current year.







## Hindu Values

We, the Hindu society are so diversified. We have different modes of worship, different names of gods, different languages, different religious practices, yet, we all have some common values to live by. Some of them are described below.

### **Respect for mother and mother Earth**

We should respect our Mother, as she is The Creator. The first word the child learns to say is “amma”, “maa”, “maama”, which all mean Mother. Mother, is in fact considered as the First Guru (teacher) for a child. This concept of respect and love for mother or creator is extended to other natural phenomena also which provide sustenance for life. For example rivers, cows which give us milk, Earth which provides us a place to live are all worshipped as mother. In general everything good, blissful, protective and evil-destroying is associated with a mother-image.

### **Respect for father and ancestors**

In Hindu families, we emphasize respect for parents and elders. Parents give their best to take care and bring up the children with values, providing them whatever they can, be it education, or otherwise. In turn, the parents should be divine for the children. Service to one's parents is considered pious and divine duty. It's a very common custom to bow down to touch the elders and parents feet which emphasizes the value of elders. The story of Shravan Kumar, who was dedicated to serve his parents is often remembered in this context.

### **Respect for Teacher (Guru)**

Like parents, the Guru is also worthy of worship. In Hindu society, Guru is worshiped as a God. A Guru is not just a teacher who gives us only education, but also inspires us and passes on his experience and knowledge.

For a Hindu, a Guru can be a person, a symbol or a book. For example, in the Sikh tradition, the holy book “Guru Granth Sahib” is treated as the Guru. In our Balagokulam, we treat ‘Bhagwa Dhwaj’ (Saffron flag) as the Guru.

## **Education**

We need to study our scriptures. Hindu (Vedic) Dharma is about the way of living (life). So we need to learn, understand and follow our customs, traditions from scriptures and not just be blind followers.

## **Devotion**

We need to cultivate devotion through worship/meditation. Devotion leads to concentration. Once we learn to concentrate, we can achieve and succeed in many aspect of life.

## **Purity in body, mind and speech**

We need to be pure in body, mind and speech. If we are not pure/clean physically, it leads to physical illness. Similarly if we are not pure in thoughts (honest), it leads to stress. Following are some of the values which will help us develop purity of mind and body.

### **1. Truth**

‘Satyameva Jayate’ (Truth alone triumphs), mentioned in our Scriptures and which also happens to appear in the national emblem of Bharat, is a value, we all should practice. The story of king Harishchandra illustrates the value of following the truth irrespective of any obstacles and difficulties.

### **2. Honesty**

Keeping up with the promises, not betraying people and not telling a lie are the unique values of the Hindu Dharma. Character and integrity leads to success and is respected by all. Many have lost everything to keep up with the promises.

### **3. Righteousness**

Righteousness is an essential part of Hindu way of life. In fact the word

‘Dharma’ is many a time translated as righteousness. Our scriptures say, ‘if you protect righteousness, the righteousness shall protect you.’

#### **4. Forgiveness, Non-Violence and Fearlessness**

Hindus believe that all life is sacred, to be loved and revered. Therefore Hindus practice non-violence. Development of qualities like non-violence and forgiveness require fearlessness and strength. The story of Swami Dayananda is a very good example in this context. Once, during one of his discourses, a misguided man, Karansingh, approached him in anger and with a sword in his hand. Swami Dayananda quickly grabbed his arm and wrenched the sword. He broke it by pressing its point to the ground. But when the man, Karansingh, felt ashamed and guilty, he forgave him without keeping anything in mind.

#### **5. Contentment and Generosity**

We should be satisfied with what we are and what we have. There is no use of being a part of the rat race or unnecessary comparison and competition. We should not be greedy but generous. Greediness normally leads to the evil thoughts in mind.

#### **6. Service and Sacrifice**

Hindus consider that the service to other is a virtue; giving pain to other is a sin. Giving and sharing is one of the values preached relentlessly in Hindu scriptures. We need to be prepared to make sacrifices and be patient. Serving the society is not optional but the duty of every hindu.

List of Hindu values is not completed here. Our sages (or scriptures) and saints have listed enormous “DO’s” and “DONT’s” for each and every individual to lead proper, right and balanced life and to make not only Hindus but everyone happy and satisfied. One of the best ways of practicing Hindu Dharma is to learn them and inculcate them in our life.





## Story of Maharana Pratap

Your dreams come true and you become successful if you have determination and a strong will. God helps those who help themselves. There is nothing impossible in the world for those with will power and unyielding determination. Although, Bharat's history is full of such examples that convey this message, Maharana Pratap's example is the unique one.

The Rajputs (a community in Northern Bharat) are brave, chivalrous and gallant people. They were the first to resist the Mughal invaders. Many wars were fought between the Rajputs and the Mughals. Rajputs of Mewar (a province in Northern Bharat) surpassed all in deeds of bravery and personal sacrifice.

Maharana Udai Singh II ruled the kingdom of Mewar (province of Northern Bharat), with his capital at Chittor. Maharana Pratap was his eldest son who was given the title of Crown Prince.

Those days, Mughal King Akbar wanted to rule the whole of Bharat and used forces to over come the Rajput kings. As a result, almost all major Rajput Kings surrendered to Akbar, but Maharana Pratap didn't!! In fact, Maharana Pratap and his few loyal Rajput chieftain took pledge in front of Goddess Kali, "Hey Kali!! We take a pledge that we will not sleep on a bed but on the ground. We will not wear any fancy clothes until we defeat our enemies!!"

Mughal King Akbar sent his associate ManaSingh to convince Maharana Pratap. In his meeting with Maharana, ManaSingh asked, "Why don't you join Akbar?" Maharana replied back, "I have not sold my honor to Akbar!! Rajputs like their honor most. You are not true Rajput!!". ManaSingh furiously said, "I came as a friend and you have insulted me. You shall pay for this". Maharana bravely replied, "Very well then!! we shall meet in the battle!!" At last Akbar and ManaSingh decided to use force against Maharana Pratap.

The great battle between Maharana Pratap and ManaSingh was fought in the valley of Haldi-Ghati in June 21 1576. Maharana had only twenty thousand soldiers where as ManaSingh and his associate Salim had eighty thousand





soldiers. There wasn't any possibility of winning the battle. Maharana thought, "If I somehow manage to kill ManaSingh, there is a slight chance of winning the battle"

Maharana Pratap advanced towards ManaSingh without any support or backup. ManaSingh was riding an elephant. Pratap, riding a horse Chetak, attacked him like a fierce lion. He threw his spear aiming at ManaSingh, but elephant moved and spear missed its target. Soon Maharana was surrounded from all sides by enemy soldiers. But he was saved by his wise horse Chetak, who took him in an unconscious state away from the battle scene. Chetak was also badly wounded, but he did not stop until he took his master to safe place.

Maharana fought bravely. In this battle he lost almost all his army. After the battle, he and his family lived in exile. But he didn't give up. He again started raising army with the help of his friend Bhama Shah and Bhil Tribals. Bhama Shah helped him raise the money and weapons. Bhil Tribals provided him with man-power.

Maharana Pratap fought relentlessly for fifteen years to get his kingdom back. By the end of 1584, he managed to liberate his most of the lost territories. But he could not get his Chittor (Capital of Mewar) back. It was still occupied by the enemies. His dream was partially fulfilled. After the relentless efforts, he died in 1597.

"Where there is a will, there is a way" is a familiar and well-known saying. This saying underlines a very vital fact of life, very few truly understand and practice it. Maharana Pratap practiced it. He did not give up until his last breath.



## : Exercise :-

**Match the Pairs**

- |                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) MahaRana Pratap       | 1) Gururdevo Maheshwaraha    |
| 2) Guru Poornima         | 2) One of Hindu Values       |
| 3) Gurubrahma Guruvishnu | 3) gurormurtih               |
| 4) Respect for mother    | 4) Truth alone triumphs      |
| 5) Satyameva Jayate      | 5) Vyas Pooja                |
| 6) Chetak                | 6) A Rajput, Prince of Mewar |
| 7) Dhyaana-mulam         | 7) MahaRana Pratap's Horse   |

**Fill up the blanks**

- 1) Balagokulam (Sangh) worships \_\_\_\_\_ as Guru.  
a) Doctorji      b) Guruji      c) None      d) Bhagava Dhvaj
- 2) "Gu" means \_\_\_\_\_ and "Ru" means remover of that \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) darkness      b) Wisdom      c) Forgiveness      d) None of these
- 3) MahaRana Pratap fought against mughal invader \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Afzal Khan      b) Babar      c) Akbar      d) None of these
- 4) Maharana Pratap's horse name was \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Chetak      b) Raja      c) Moti      d) None of these
- 5) Maharana Pratap fought against Manasingh in the valley of \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Rajasthan      b) Mewar      c) Haldi-Ghati      d) None of these
- 6) This month's shloka is based on salutations to \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Guru      b) Friend      c) Mother      d) None of these
- 7) Swami Dayananda is an example of \_\_\_\_\_ and fearlessness.  
a) Devotion      b) Honest      c) forgiveness      d) None of theses

**Questions**

1) What is the best way (form) of worshipping Guru?

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2) Why does Balagokulam/Sangh consider Bhagava Dhwaj as Guru?

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3) Describe any two Hindu Values.

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4) Describe the meaning of shloka.

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5) Describe Amrutvachan in your own words.

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## Questions for Research

(Note that answers to these questions may not be found in this curriculum. It is expected that you get those answers from other sources such as Parents, Books or Internet)

- 1) Shravan Kumar was dedicated to serve his parents. Find out the story of Shravan Kumar.

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- 2) Find out at least two hindu values which are not listed in this curriculum.

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- 3) What was the name of MahaRana Pratap's Son?

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# SKIT

## Topic - Hindu Values

Considering sankhya, shikshak should split the participants into 2 to 3 teams. Each team will select one idea, create a 5 minutes skit based on the idea selected and perform it in front of others. Portray a situation that would best represent topic using the idea selected and if there is a problem show a possible solution. Feel free to make it as comical or serious as you want. Friendly competition can be conducted.

### **Idea: Respect for Gurus**

Hint: Gurus are highly respected for the knowledge that they give us. It is in our sanskar to respect them.

### **Idea: Satya**

Hint: Truth is a primary Hindu value. When you tell truth, you do not have to remember what you told.

### **Idea: Dharma**

Hint: Dharma is the foundation of Hinduism. Helping others is dharma.

### **Idea: Ahimsa**

Hint: Non-violence is key to success. Animals are also live-being. One should not kill them. Live animals are more useful to man than dead animals.

## Shloka

कृष्ण (krishna)

वसुदेव सुतं देवम्	vasudeva sutam devam
कंसचाणूर मर्दनम् ।	kansa-chaanura mardanam
देवकी परमानन्दम्	devaki paramaa-nandam
कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥	krishnam vande jagad-gurum

I bow to Sri Krishna, son of Vasudeva, the divine being, guru of the entire world, the killer of wicked Kamsa and Chanoora, and the source of happiness to mother Devaki.

गोविन्द गोविन्द हरे मुरारे	Govinda Govinda hare muraare
गोविन्द गोविन्द मुकुन्द कृष्ण ।	Govinda Govinda mukunda Krishna
गोविन्द गोविन्द रथाङ्गपाणे	Govinda Govinda rathang-paane
गोविन्द दामोदर माधवेति ॥	Govinda daamodar maadh-veti

O my mind, keep chanting Govinda, Govinda. Daamodar, Maadhava and that's all.

## Subhashitam

येन बद्धो बलिः राजा दानवेन्द्रो महाबलः  
तेन त्वाम अनुबध्नामि रक्षे माचल-माचलः

Yena baddho Balee raajaa daanavendro mahaabalah |  
tena twaam anubadhnaami rakshe maa chala maa chala ||  
( I am tying a Rakshaa to you, similar to the one tied to Bali the powerful king of demons. Oh Rakshaa, be firm, do not waver)

## Amrutvachan

The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man or a nation loses faith, death comes.



Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourself weak, weak you will be; if you think yourself strong, strong you will be.

The Vedanta teaches men to have faith in themselves first. As certain religions of the world say that a man who does not believe in a personal God outside of himself is an atheist, so the Vedanta says, a man who does not believe in himself is an atheist.

The goal is to manifest the divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy – by one or more all of these – and be free.

- Swami Vivekananda

## Geet

### Hindu Mission is Prerana

Hindu Mission is Prerana  
 Mai Sadhna Neo Sandhna,  
 Sadhna true Sandhna

Ganga is for purity  
 Himalaya for eternity  
 Song and Dance of Dharma  
 is the Shakha spirit of quality

||Hindu Mission||

Shakha is through Krishna thought  
 Bhagawa is the master sought  
 in our struggles of life and work  
 follow what the Gita taught  
 follow what the Gita taught

||Hindu Mission||

Shine of wealth is charity  
 need of hour is unity  
 peace and tranquil process is the  
 Keshava vision of clarity  
 Keshava vision of clarity

||Hindu Mission||



## Raksha Bandhan

The Raksha Bandhan is a celebration of the abiding and chaste bond of love between the brother and the sister. It is also known as Rakhi Poornima as it is celebrated on the full moon (Poornima) day of the holy month Shravana (August). The Raksha Bandhan festival stirs up one of the deepest and noblest emotions in the human heart - the abiding and chaste bond of love between the brother and the sister. The duties of brothers and the love and affection of sisters are symbolized through the tying of Rakhi. In earlier days, it was merely a festival of brothers and sisters, but now it has become of all.

On the Raksha Bandhan day, the festivities start by the day break. Everyone gets ready early and gathers for the worship of the deities. After invoking the blessings of the Gods, the sister performs brother's aarti, puts tika and chawal (rice) on his forehead and ties Rakhi. Then she gives him sweets and gifts. The brother accepts her offerings and vows to take care of her and be by her side in the time of need. As a token he gives the sister a return gift and sweets. Emotions can be expressed through emails, greeting cards, and rakhis through internet or mail in case siblings can not meet in person.



On this day, in the coastal regions of Bharat, Bharatiya people worship the rain God Indra and the Sea God Varuna. They offer coconut and seek their blessings. Fishermen starts their voyages on this day for fishing. The farmers start sowing seeds on this day and pray for a good crop. It is said that Lord Rama started for Lanka to rescue Sita on this day. He crossed the sea from the bridge made by the Vanar Sena by throwing stones in water.

Thousands of events highlight the importance of the Raksha Bandhan. For instance, in an incident of Mahabharata, when Lord Krishna kills Shishupala with his weapon, Sudarshan-Chakra, his finger gets wounded. Seeing this Draupadi tears a piece of cloth from her sari and ties on the wound. And after quite sometime,

when Draupadi was insulted by the Kauravas Lord Krishna rescues her by showering saaris. In another incident, once Yudhishtira asked Sri Krishna how best he could guard himself against impending evils and catastrophes in the coming year. Krishna advised him to observe the Raksha Ceremony.

The sister-brother relationship highlighted by the Raakhi goes far beyond the mere personal protection of a female from a male. It also implies the basic element of an amicable and harmonious social life where all members of the society look upon themselves as brothers and sisters and as children of mother Earth. In Hindu tradition, Raksha has assumed all aspects of protection of the forces of righteousness from the forces of evil.

Raksha Bandhan festival helps to create the sentiments of universal brotherhood which is the need of today's world to keep the social harmony and piece. A society imbued with this spirit can live and prosper amidst all kinds of challenges either from within or without. Powers of intellect, body, and of material wealth and influence will then be utilized for the upliftment and service of others. The idea of the Hindu has always been:

*Sarvepi sukhinassantu, sarve santu niraamayaah |*  
*Sarve bhadraani pashyantu, maa kashchit duhkhabhaag bhavet ||*

(Let everyone be happy, let everyone be free from all ills, let everyone behold only the auspicious, let no one be afflicted.)

Raksha Bandhan is the most useful mean to bring this idea into reality.

In Sangh, this festival (utsav) is celebrated in a little different way. Sangh participants not only tie Raksha to each other, but also to Bhagava Dhwaj (Saffron Flag). Bhagava Dhwaj symbolizes entire Hindu society. The tying of Raakhi to the sacred Bhagavaa Dhwaj at the start of the function signifies this social and cultural aspect. Not only do the participants in the function develop a sense of love and affection amongst themselves but they also affirm their loyalty and devotion to the Hindu society of which they are the children. Their commitment to protect each other and also the society as a whole is emphasized through this simple ceremony.

Raksha Bandhan is a most auspicious occasion to recharge ourselves every year with the true spirit of service and sacrifice for the welfare of the society, and find therein the highest spiritual fulfillment of human life.







## Freedom Struggle



As we walk through the world history, we can easily conclude that the most of the countries were under the control of foreign invaders/rulers either for a small time (30-40 years) or for a long time (100 to 300 years). The main purpose of the foreign invaders was to bring as much area as possible under their control. They not only looted local people but also destroyed their cultural heritage such as buildings, religious/sacred places, books, etc. They captured other countries either by force or by diplomacy. There are very few countries in the world those have never ever invaded any other countries. Bharat (India) is one of them.

In the 18th century, America was also invaded and ruled by British. America struggled a lot for her freedom. The great heroes of America fought back, defeated British and made her free from the shackles of them. Isn't it great! People of America are always thankful to them. They celebrate 4th of July as America's Independence Day. You may ask, "What is Independence Day?" It is the day when America got freedom and independent sovereign of their own people. This glorious and memorable day is celebrated throughout America as an Independence Day.

Bharat (India), too, was under the control of foreign people. During the beginning of Christian era, she was invaded and looted by so many foreigners. Do you know why so many foreign invaders invaded Bharat? It is because Bharat is the oldest civilization with glorious past. She was rich in culture, diverse but still united. She was a beautiful country spiritually and geographically. Bharat was wealthy too. No one was poor. Bharat had enormous of knowledge in terms of science, mathematics and spirituality. Bharatiya People's behavior and character was extremely high. In those days, there was no other country but Bharat, which was so big, beautiful and

advanced in all fields. No wonder! Invaders from the middle-east had their lustful eyes on Bharat. Around three thousand years back, they started attacking Bharat to concur her. But the great heroes of Bharat such as the King Harshavardhan, King Chandragupta, King Shalivahana, King Vikramaditya and many more fought back and defeated the invaders. We do remember them when we chant our ekatmata (Bharat-Bhakti) stotra.

Just like America, Bharat too was ruled by British. Around 300 years back British came to Bharat as traders. Gradually they started taking interest in politics. Unfortunately Bharat, though culturally united, did not have one rule and administration by that time. It was divided in several small kingdoms. British took the advantage of this situation and applied divide-and-rule formula. Sometimes using political tactics and sometimes winning battle, they took control of entire Bharat and soon they became of the rulers of Bharat.

During the independence, broadly there were two major movements fighting for the independence; non-revolutionaries and revolutionaries. Non-revolutionaries adapted a way of non-violence. They applied peaceful and legitimate means such as protest against British, non-cooperation with them and constitutional agitation. Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabh-bhai Patel were the first row leaders of this movement. On the other side, revolutionaries wanted to attain freedom by hook or by crook. They would do anything to make Bharat independent. They would not hesitate to kill British whenever required. They were ready to sacrifice their own lives. Some handful names of the revolutionaries are Swa. Savarkar, Subhash Chandra Bose, Lok. Tilak, Bhagat Singh, ChandraShekhar Azad. **Though the path of these movements was different, objective was same – freedom!**

There was one person who was not happy with both the revolutionary and non-revolutionary movements for freedom. In the beginning he participated in both movements. But he was not happy with the leaders, their thoughts and their paths. His name was Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar! Yes! Our Doctorji. He wondered, “Why the land of Ram, Sita, Krishna, Rana Pratap and Shivaji had become so weak. How could a handful of British (25000 in number) control such a huge nation (Bharat),

with a population of 300 million” He concluded that British dedication, loyalty to their country and excellent organizational skills were the secrets of their success. This was what Bharat lacked. For a living nation, an organized people and good administration is essential.

Doctorji thought more about the Bharat than just a freedom. Once talking to his associates he asked, “Even if we are successful to kick out British, what is the guarantee that they won’t come back? And even after the freedom, can we get our country to the pinnacle of Glory?”.

Then he adapted a different way! He started an organization, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to organize the people and fill them up with patriotism, make them realize their true identity, make them dedicated and ready for sacrifice, make them proud of their glorious culture and make them think more about society and country than self. Such organized people will ensure not only freedom but also glorious future. Doctorji started Sangh around 80 years back. Sangh’s work rapidly increased in all parts of the country and now it has been proved a major force in the progress of Bharat.

At last, the day came when Bharat got freedom. With everybody’s efforts and after the sacrifices of thousands, Bharat attained her freedom on the August 15th of 1947. Now the Bharat is governed and ruled by her own people. Having a breakthrough in all major fields, she is progressing by leaps and bound and climbing towards the pinnacle of glory.

This is the brief story of Independence of Bharat. But what was the purpose of presenting it before us? Why do we care about Bharat? It is because Bharat is our forefather’s country. Our roots are originated in Bharat. She is our spiritual country too. Bharat is the first country where our Hindu culture, our Hindu Dharma is flourished. Isn’t it? Having this relationship with Bharat, it becomes our responsibility to care for her. The way we care for America, we should also care for Bharat.





## Rituals and Their Meaning

When we carefully observe, we find that hindu people perform several types of rituals in thier lives. Even at home, we see, our parents do several things such as doing daily pooja, fasting, putting bindi / marks on forehead, chanting prayers/hymns on different occassions. Initially we think that these rituals are unnecessary and they lead to superstition. But once we understand the meaning and objective of these rituals, we will feel those rituals necessary and important. However, some rituals may be irrilivant in today's world as they are not oriented or based on eternal truths. Let us try to learn some Hindu Rituals.

### **Why do we light a lamp?**

In almost every Hindu home a lamp is lit daily before the altar of the Lord. In some houses it is lit at dawn, in some, twice a day – at dawn and dusk – and in a few it is maintained continuously (akhanda deepa). All auspicious functions commence with the lighting of the lamp, which is often maintained right through the occasion.

Light symbolizes knowledge. The Lord is the “Knowledge Principle” (chaitanya) who is the source, the enlivener and the illuminator of all knowledge. Hence light is worshiped as the Lord himself.

Knowledge removes ignorance just as light removes darkness. Also knowledge is a lasting inner wealth by which all outer achievement can be accomplished. Hence we light the lamp to bow down to knowledge as the greatest of all forms of wealth

Why not light a bulb or tube light? That too would remove darkness. But the traditional oil lamp has a further spiritual significance. The oil or ghee in the lamp symbolizes our vaasanas or negative tendencies and the wick, the ego. When lit by spiritual knowledge, the vaasanas get slowly exhausted and the ego too finally perishes. The flame of a lamp always burns upwards.

Similarly we should acquire such knowledge as to take us towards higher ideals. While lighting the lamp we thus pray:

Deepajyothi parabrahma  
 Deepa Jyotir Janaardana  
 Deepo harati paapaani  
 Sandhyaa deepa namostute ||

I prostrate to the dawn/dusk lamp; whose light is the Knowledge Principle (the Supreme Lord), which removes the darkness of ignorance and by which all can be achieved in life.

### **Why do we have a prayer room?**

Most Hindu homes have a prayer room or altar. A lamp is lit and the Lord worshipped each day. Other spiritual practices like japa (repetition of the Lord's name), meditation, paaraayana (reading of the scriptures), prayers, devotional singing etc is also done here. Special worship is done on auspicious occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, festivals and the like. Each member of the family – young or old – communes with and worships the Divine here.

The Lord is the entire creation. He is therefore the true owner of the house we live in to. The prayer room is the Master room of the house. We are the earthly occupants of His property. This notion rids us of false pride and possessiveness.

The ideal attitude to take is to regard the Lord as the true owner of our homes and ourselves as caretakers of His home. But if that is rather difficult, we could at least think of Him as a very welcome guest. Just as we would house an important guest in the best comfort, so too we felicitate the Lord's presence in our homes by having a prayer room or altar, which is, at all times, kept clean and well-decorated.

Also the Lord is all-pervading. To remind us that He resides in our homes with us, we have prayer rooms. Without the grace of the Lord, no task can be successfully or easily accomplished. We invoke His grace by communing with Him in the prayer room each day and on special occasions.

Each room in a house is dedicated to a specific function like the bedroom for resting, the drawing room to receive guests, the kitchen for cooking etc.



The furniture, decor and the atmosphere of each room are made conducive to the purpose it serves. So too for the purpose of meditation, worship and prayer, we should have a conducive atmosphere – hence the need for a prayer room.

Sacred thoughts and sound vibrations pervade the place and influence the minds of those who spend time there. Spiritual thoughts and vibrations accumulated through regular meditation, worship and chanting done there pervade the prayer room. Even when we are tired or agitated, by just sitting in the prayer room for a while, we feel calm, rejuvenated and spiritually uplifted.

### **Why do we do Namaste?**

Hindus greet each other with namaste. The two palms are placed together in front of the chest and the head bows whilst saying the word namaste. This greeting is for all – people younger than us, of our own age, those older than us, friends and even strangers.

There are five forms of formal traditional greeting enjoined in the shastras of which namaskaram is one. This is understood as prostration but it actually refers to paying homage as we do today when we greet each other with a namaste.

Namaste could be just a casual or formal greeting, a cultural convention or an act of worship. However there is much more to it than meets the eye. In Sanskrit namah + te = namaste. It means – I bow to you – my greetings, salutations or prostration to you. Namaha can also be literally interpreted as “na ma” (not mine). It has a spiritual significance of negating or reducing one’s ego in the presence of another.

The real meeting between people is the meeting of their minds. When we greet another, we do so with namaste, which means, “may our minds meet,” indicated by the folded palms placed before the chest. The bowing down of the head is a gracious form of extending friendship in love and humility.

The spiritual meaning is even deeper. The life force, the divinity, the Self or the Lord in me is the same in all. Recognising this oneness with the meeting of the palms, we salute with head bowed the Divinity in the person we meet. That is why sometimes, we close our eyes as we do namaste to a revered

person or the Lord – as if to look within. The gesture is often accompanied by words like “Ram Ram”, “Jai Shri Krishna”, “Namo Narayana”, “Jai Siya Ram”, “Om Shanti” etc – indicating the recognition of this divinity.

When we know this significance, our greeting does not remain just a superficial gesture or word but paves the way for a deeper communion with another in an atmosphere of love and respect.

### **Why do we wear marks (like tilak, pottu) on the forehead?**

The tilak or pottu invokes a feeling of sanctity in the wearer and others. It is recognized as a religious mark. Its form and color vary according to one's caste, religious sect or the form of the Lord worshipped.

The tilak cover the spot between the eyebrows, which is the seat of memory and thinking. It is known as the Aajna Chakra in the language of Yoga. The tilak is applied with the prayer – “May I remember the Lord. May this pious feeling pervade all my activities. May I be righteous in my deeds.” Even when we temporarily forget this prayerful attitude the mark on another reminds us of our resolve. The tilak is thus a blessing of the Lord and a protection against wrong tendencies and forces.

The entire body emanates energy in the form of electromagnetic waves – the forehead and the subtle spot between the eyebrows especially so. That is why worry generates heat and causes a headache. The tilak and pottu cools the forehead, protects us and prevents energy loss. Some times the entire forehead is covered with chandan or bhasma. Using plastic reusable “stick bindis” is not very beneficial, even though it serves the purpose of decoration.

### **Why do we apply the holy ash?**

The ash of any burnt object is not regarded as holy ash. Bhasma (the holy ash) is the ash from the homa (sacrificial fire) where special wood along with ghee and other herbs is offered as worship of the Lord. Or the deity is worshipped by pouring ash as abhisheka and is then distributed as bhasma.

Bhasma is generally applied on the forehead. Some apply it on certain parts of the body like the upper arms, chest etc. Some ascetics rub it all over the body. Many consume a pinch of it each time they receive it.



Homa (offering of oblations into the fire with sacred chants) signifies the offering or surrender of the ego and egocentric desires into the flame of knowledge or a noble and selfless cause. The consequent ash signifies the purity of the mind, which results from such actions. Also the fire of knowledge burns the oblation and wood signifying ignorance and inertia respectively. The ash we apply indicates that we should burn false identification with the body and become free of the limitations of birth and death. This is not to be misconstrued as a morose reminder of death but as a powerful pointer towards the fact that time and tide wait for none.

Bhasma is specially associated with Lord Shiva who applies it all over His body. Shiva devotes apply bhasma as a tripundra (the form of “o”). When applied with a red spot at the centre, the mark symbolises Shiva-Shakti (the unity of energy and matter that creates the entire seen and unseen universe).

Bhasma has medicinal value and is used in many ayurvedic medicines. It absorbs excess moisture from the body and prevents colds and headaches. The Upanishads say that the famous Mrityunjaya mantra should be chanted whilst applying ash on the forehead.

Tryambakam yajaamahe  
Sugandhim pushtivardhanam  
Urvaarukamiva bhandhanaan  
Mrytyor muksheeyamaa amrutaat

“We worship the three-eyed Lord Shiva who nourishes and spread fragrance in our lives. May He free us from the shackles of sorrow, change and death – effortlessly, like the fall of a ripe brinjal (eggplant) from its stem.”

We will see few more hindu rituals in the following chapters.



## : Exercise :-

**Match the Pairs**

- |                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1) Full moon of the Month     | 1) sarve santu niraamayaah |
| 2) Sarvepi sukhinassantu      | 2) Universal Brotherhood   |
| 3) Ganga is for purity (geet) | 3) Bhasma                  |
| 4) Holy Ash                   | 4) Saffron Flag            |
| 5) Raksha Bandhan             | 5) Poornima                |
| 6) vasudeva sutam devam       | 6) Himalaya for eternity   |
| 7) Bhagva Dhvaj               | 7) Kansa-chaanura mardanam |

**Fill up the blanks**

- 1) Raksha-Bandhan is celebrated on the full moon day of \_\_\_\_\_ month.  
a) Bhadrapad   b) Shravana   c) Kartik   d) None of these
- 2) Light symbolizes \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) darkness   b) knowledge   c) ignorance   d) None of these
- 3) Knowledge removes \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Ignorance   b) Wisdom   c) Happiness   d) None of these
- 4) The two palms are placed together in front of the chest and the head bows while saying the word \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Hello   b) Namaste   c) Hi   d) None of these
- 5) Bhasma has medicinal values and is used in \_\_\_\_\_ medicines.  
a) Allopathic   b) Homeopathic   c) Ayurvedic   d) None of these
- 6) Doctorji started Sangh around \_\_\_\_\_ years back.  
a) 10   b) 50   c) 80   d) None of these

## Questions

1) Why was Bharat (India) invaded by so many invaders?

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2) Why do we do Namaste?

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3) What is the importance of applying Bhasma?

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4) Describe the importance of Raksha Bandhan? How is it celebrated in our Balagokulam?

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## Questions for Research

(Note that answers to these questions may not be found in this curriculum. It is expected that you get those answers from other sources such as Parents, Books or Internet)

- 1) Describe any two rituals which are not listed in this curriculum?

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## Make a Rakhi for your brother....

Rakhi, a colourful piece of art, with silken threads entwined together in an attractive manner and adorned with beads and golden threads are placed on the wrists of brothers for their good health, wealth, happiness and success. This festival establishes the bond of love and affection amongst brothers and sisters. Let us learn how to make a Rakhi.

### Material needed:

- >> Strands of silk threads-2/3
- >> A pair of scissors
- >> Cotton thread to tie knots
- >> Beads, sitaras, golden threads and sponge to decorate
- >> Glue
- >> A toothbrush with hard bristles

### Method:

Take 20-24 inches long silk thread strands in a bunch. If you want to make multi coloured rakhis take silk threads of different colours.

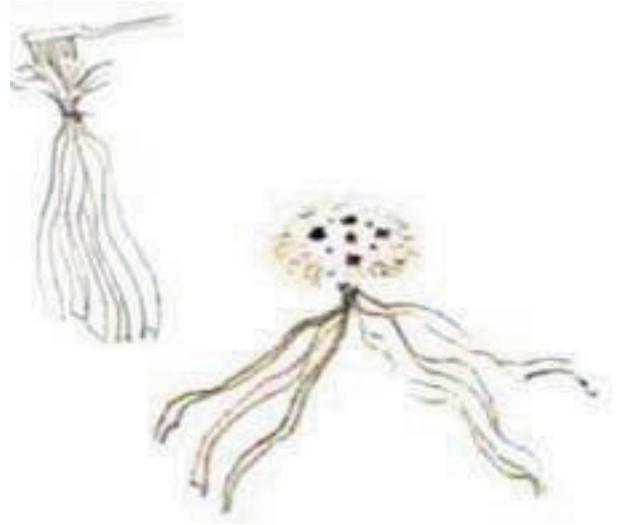


Tie a tight knot with a cotton thread on the one-fourth part of the silken thread bunch. The one-fourth part will be made into a rakhi while the three-fourth will be the string to tie around the wrist.

Now make sure the heads of the silk threads of the one-fourth part of the bunch do not remain in loops, in case they are, cut them with a pair of scissors.



Once they are independent of loops, with a toothbrush rub hard on these threads and brush them with strong strokes by holding tight on the knot. With repeated strokes the silk threads turns fluffy and soft.



To make the string, divide the three-fourth part of the silk thread in two equal parts and plait them separately. At the end tie a knot and brush the end again.

Once this is done decorate it with beads or sitaras. Stick them with glue. You can purchase sponge of a suitable colour, cut it into a star shape, decorate it with beads or sitaras. Golden threads can be entwined used for decoration. And then stick it with glue.



## Shloka

कार्य सिद्धि (kārya siddhi)

शुक्लाम्बरधरं विष्णुम् ।	śuklāmbaradharam viṣṇum
शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम् ॥	śaśivarnam caturbhujam
प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत् ।	prasannavadanam dhyāyet
सर्व विघ्नोऽपशान्तये ॥	sarva vighno'paśāntaye

For the removal of all the obstacles in my effort, I meditate upon Bhagawan Ganesha, who wears a white garment, who is all pervading, who has a bright complexion (like a full moon), who has four shoulders, who has an ever smiling face.

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गणेश (Ganesh)

अगजानन पद्मार्कम्	Agajanana Padmarkam
गजाननं अहर्निषं ।	Gajananam Aharnisham
अनेकदन्तं भक्तानां	Anekadhamtham Bhakthanam
एकदन्तं उपास्महे ॥	Ekadantham Upasmahe

(I worship day and night that elephant faced Lord Ganesha who is like sun to the lotus face of Mother Parvati. Giver of many boons, the single tusked Ganesh, I salute Thee to give me a boon)



## Subhashitam

न अभिषेको न संस्कारः सिंहस्य क्रियते वने |  
विक्रमार्जितसत्त्वस्य स्वयमेव मृगेंद्रता ||

There is no official coronation (RaajyaBhishek) ceremony held to declare that lion is the king of jungle. He becomes king by his own attributes and heroism ('Parakram').

## Amrutvachan

Behind everything, the same divinity is existing, and out of this comes the basis of morality. Do not injure another. Love everyone as your own self, because the whole universe is one; in injuring another, I am injuring myself; in loving another, I am loving myself. From this also springs that principle of Advaita, morality, which has been summed up in one word, self-abnegation.



The highest principle, the Lord of all, cannot be a person. The Jiva is an individual and the sum total of all Jivas is Ishvara. In the Jiva, Avidya, or nescience, is predominant, but Ishvara controls Maya, composed of Avidya and Vidya (knowledge), and independently projects this world of movable and immovable things out of Himself. Brahman transcends both the individual and collective aspects, the Jiva and Ishvara. In Brahman, there is no part.

- Swami Vivekananda

## Geet

### Hindu Mission is Prerana

Hindu Mission is Prerana  
 Mai Sadhna Neo Sandhna,  
 Sadhna true Sandhna

Ganga is for purity  
 Himalaya for eternity  
 Song and Dance of Dharma  
 is the Shakha spirit of quality

||Hindu Mission||

Shakha is through Krishna thought  
 Bhagawa is the master sought  
 in our struggles of life and work  
 follow what the Gita taught  
 follow what the Gita taught

||Hindu Mission||

Shine of wealth is charity  
 need of hour is unity  
 peace and tranquil process is the  
 Keshava vision of clarity  
 Keshava vision of clarity

||Hindu Mission||



## Symbolic Meaning of Lord Ganesha

Hindu people accept the existence of several gods, goddesses, animal deities and planet deities. Hindu people also believe that all these gods/goddesses are not separate entities but the different forms (modes) of same supreme reality (Super-God or Paramatman). Supreme God manifest himself in different forms or aspects for specific purposes. Hindu people have free will to choose any form of the supreme God (*Ishta Devata*) to worship and pray. Whichever form they may choose to pray or worship, ultimately it leads to the supreme God.

Lord Ganesha (or Ganapati) is also one of the many forms of the God. He was also the older son of Lord Shiva and Parvati. Ganesha is also known as the god of knowledge and remover of obstacles. That is why he is also called by the names Vinayak (knowledgeable) or Vighneshwar (remover of obstacles). Ganesha is also known as “Gajanana”. Gajanana means a leader. Ganesha has all leadership qualities. We all know the fascinating story of the creation of such a unique form (Ganesha) of Supreme God. Let us explore the symbolic meaning of Ganesha.

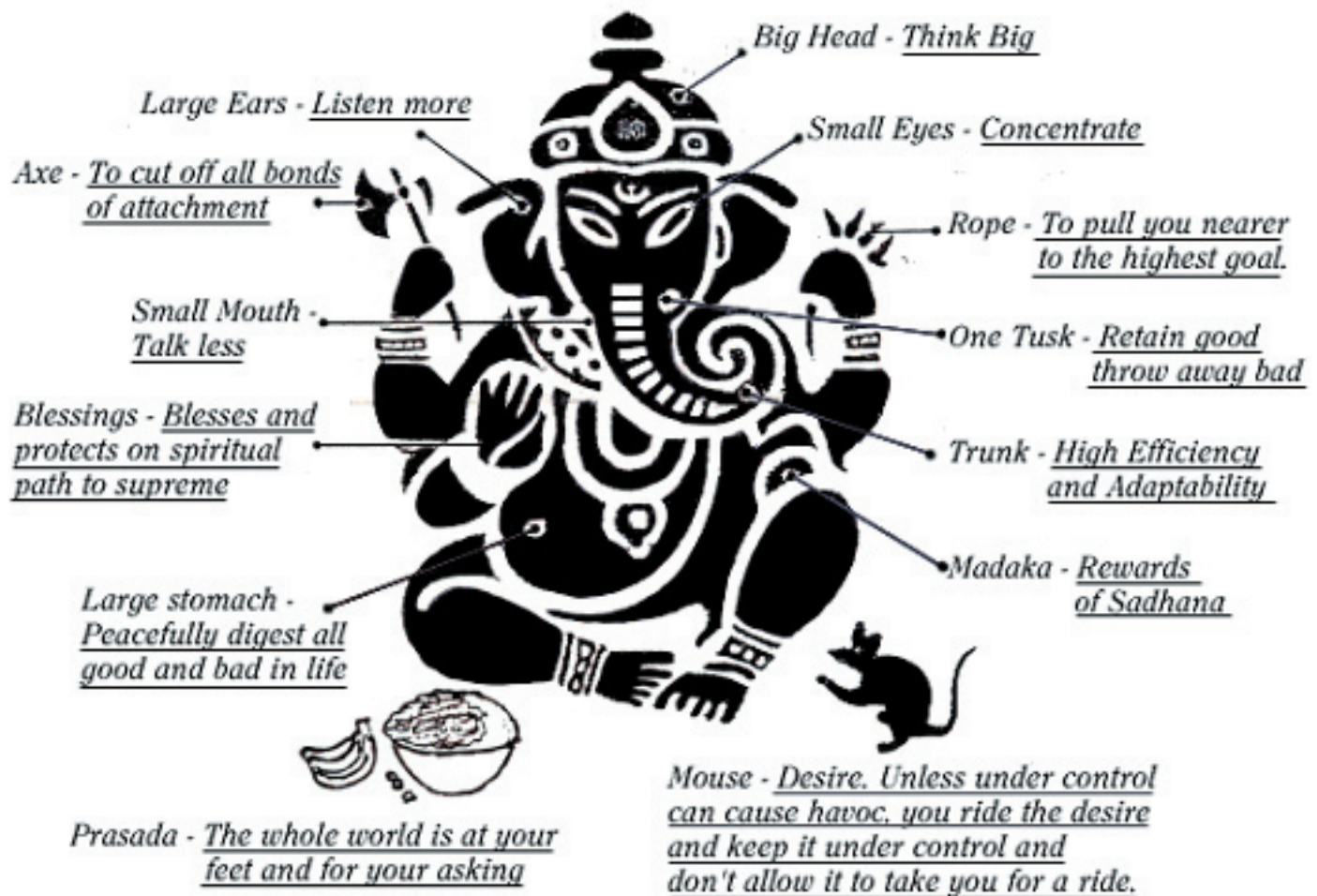
Ganesha has elephant's head, which is big. It symbolizes intelligence and big thinking. One must have sharp intelligence. An elephant's life is full of radiance, which comes from dignity and self-esteem. We must have same radiance. Also the elephant shares his food by scattering some around himself. A leader suppose to have the same sense of generosity.

Ganesha has large ears and flowing like elephant. A leader should be able to listen to everything around him but retain only the positive and constructive and discarding the rest. Large ears are also a symbol of acute and superior hearing. One should be able to detect even the slightest murmur among the people and be aware of even the most minute and seemingly insignificant needs and concerns.

Ganesha's small eyes indicate sharp vision and concentration. To transform a society he should be able to understand the nature and impact

of one's work. Small eyes are also a symbol of foresight. One must be able to envision and act in the interest of future.

Trunk is the symbol of high strength, efficiency and adaptability. It can move the biggest obstacle and yet infinitely gentle in handling delicate objects. A leader in the same way should have keen perception of the difficulties and



the strength to overcome.

Ganesha has one full and other half tusk. The partial tusk symbolizes intelligence and the full tusk symbolizes faith. To progress in life we need both. However the intelligence often falls short in providing answers to life's burning questions. When it falls short, faith in God and ourselves can carry us through life successfully. Often the flowers of faith withers beneath the bright fire of intellect. As intellect grows, ego grows and can cast a shadow over faith. Hence a leader should strike a balance between the two.

Ganesha's four hands have four things which are symbols for the qualities a leader should have. **Ankush** (Elephant driver's iron prod) used to control

and restrain elephants. Leader should in the same way be able to cut off all bonds of attachment and restrain his and people's desires and passions. **Pash** (cord) symbol of restrain and punishment. Leader should have the capacity to punish or control his and others senses. This is necessary to pull you nearer to the highest goal. **Modak** is dry and hard from outside and sweet from inside and nourishing. This represents that hard work (sadhana) brings joy, satisfaction and nourishment to our souls. **Ashirwad** means Ganesha blesses and protects us on our spiritual path to Supreme.

Ganesha has large Stomach. It symbolizes one of the essential qualities a leader should have. Leader always confront people. He should peacefully digest all good and bad things without losing control. People frequently approach Leaders and confide problems, concerns and stories they have in their lives and work. A good leader should understand that people, trust them and he should maintain their confidentiality.

Ganesha's small legs do not allow him to move hastily. A leader must take small and careful steps. He must not rush into anything. Each step must be slow deliberate and well thought of.

Mouse-vehicle of Ganesha symbolizes desire. Desire, if not in control, can cause havoc. Ganesha rides on the mouse. One should ride the desire and keep it under control and do not allow desire to take you for a ride.

Durva meaning grass is placed on the head of Ganesh. The grass is something that we constantly walk on or trample on, paying little heed to it. When in fact it contributes so much to our survival by giving out oxygen. But we give importance to Durva by placing them on his head. This tells us no matter how much you are looked down upon or insignificant to others or not given the importance you deserve, you are important to me.

Red Flower indicates red color. Red color stands for total change or revolution. A leader should be able to bring about revolution in the society to maintain dharma in the society.

We learnt that how the leadership qualities Lord Ganesha possesses. The best pooja offered to Lord Ganesha is to inculcate those qualities in us.







# Rituals and their Meaning

(Continued from previous chapter)

In the previous chapters, we learnt some rituals that are regularly implemented by Hindu people. Let us try to learn more.

## Why do we fast?

Most devout Hindus fast regularly or on special occasions like festivals. On such days they do not eat at all, eat once or make do with fruits or a special diet of simple food. Fasting in Sanskrit is called upavaasa. Upa means “near” + vaasa means “to stay”. Upavaasa therefore means staying near (the God), meaning the attainment of close mental proximity with the Lord. Then what has upavaasa to do with food?

A lot of our time and energy is spent in procuring food items, cooking, eating and digesting food. Certain food types make our minds dull and agitated. Hence on certain days people decide to save time and conserve their energy by eating either simple, light food or totally abstaining from eating so that the mind becomes alert and pure. The mind, otherwise pre-occupied by the thought of food, now entertains noble thoughts and stays with the Lord. Since it is a self-imposed form of discipline it is usually adhered to with joy.

Also every system needs a break and an overhaul to work at its best. Rest and a change of diet during fasting is very good for the digestive system and the entire body. The more you indulge the senses, the more they make their demands. Fasting helps us to cultivate control over our senses, sublimate our desires. Fasting should not make us weak, irritable or create an urge to indulge later. This happens when there is no noble goal behind fasting.

The Bhagavad Geeta urges us to eat appropriately - neither too less nor too much - yukta-aahaara and to eat simple, pure and healthy food (a saatvik diet) even when not fasting.

## Why do we regard trees and plants as sacred?

The God, the life in us, pervades all living beings, be they plants or animals. Hence, they are all regarded as sacred. Human life on earth depends



on plants and trees. They give us the vital factors that makes life possible on earth: food, oxygen, clothing, shelter, medicines etc.

Hence, in Bharat, we are taught to regard trees and plants as sacred. Hindu scriptures tell us to plant ten trees if, for any reason, we have to cut one. We are advised to use parts of trees and plants only as much as is needed for food, fuel, shelter etc. we are also urged to apologize to a plant or tree before cutting it.

Certain trees and plants like tulasi, peepal etc. which have tremendous beneficial qualities, are worshipped till today. It is believed that divine beings manifest as trees and plants, and many people worship them to fulfill their desires or to please the Lord.

## Why do we say shaanti thrice?

Shaanti, meaning “peace”, is a natural state of being. Disturbances are created either by us or others. For example, peace already exists in a place until someone makes noise. Therefore, peace underlies all our agitations. When agitations end, peace is naturally experienced since it was already there. Where there is peace, there is happiness. Therefore, every one without exception desires peace in his/her life.

However, peace within or without seems very hard to attain because it is covered by our own agitations. A rare few manage to remain peaceful within even in the midst of external agitation and troubles. To invoke peace, we chant prayers. By chanting prayers, troubles end and peace is experienced internally, irrespective of the external disturbances. All such prayers end by chanting shaanti thrice.

It is believed that trivaram satyam - that which is said thrice comes true. For emphasising a point we repeat a thing thrice. In the court of law also, one who takes the witness stands says, “I shall speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth”.

The popular notion of peace today is ‘absence of war’. But Hindus think of peace at three levels. We chant shaanti thrice to emphasize our intense desire for peace. All obstacles, problems and sorrows originate from three sources.

**Aadhidaivika:** The unseen divine forces over which we have little or no control like earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions etc.

**Aadhibhautika:** The known factors around us like accidents, human contacts, pollution, crime etc.

**Aadhyaatmika:** We sincerely pray to the Lord that at least while we undertake special tasks or even in our daily lives, there are no problems or that, problems are minimized from the three sources written about above.

May peace alone prevail. Hence shaanti is chanted thrice.

## Why do we do aarati?

Towards the end of every ritualistic worship (pooja or bhajan) of the Lord or to welcome an honored guest or saint, we perform the aarati. This is always accompanied by the ringing of the bell and sometimes by singing, playing of musical instruments and clapping. It is one of the sixteen steps (shodasha upachaara) of the pooja ritual. It is referred to as the lighted lamp in the right hand, which we wave in a clockwise circling movement to light the entire form of the Lord. Each part is revealed individually and also the entire form of the Lord. As the light is waved we either do mental or loud chanting of prayers or simply behold the beautiful form of the Lord, illumined by the lamp. At the end of the aarati we place our hands over the flame and then gently touch our eyes and the top of the head.

We have seen and participated in this ritual from our childhood. Let us find out why we do the aarati?

Having worshipped the Lord of love - performing abhisheka, decorating the image and offering fruits and delicacies, we see the beauty of the Lord in all His glory. Our minds are focussed on each limb of the Lord as the lamp lights it up. It is akin to silent open-eyed meditation on His beauty. The singing, clapping, ringing of the bell etc. denote the joy and auspiciousness which accompanies the vision of the Lord.

Aarati is often performed with camphor. This holds a telling spiritual significance. Camphor when lit, burns itself out completely without leaving a trace of it. It represents our inherent tendencies (vaasanas). When lit by the fire of knowledge which illumines the Lord (Truth), our vaasanas thereafter burn themselves out completely, not leaving a trace of ego which creates in us a sense of individuality that keeps us separate from the Lord. Also while camphor burns to reveal the glory of Lord, it emits a pleasant perfume even while it sacrifices itself. In our spiritual progress, even as we serve the guru and society, we should willingly sacrifice ourselves and all we have, to spread

the “perfume” of love to all. We often wait a long while to see the illumined Lord but when the aarati is actually performed, our eyes close automatically as if to look within. This is to signify that each of us is a temple of the Lord.

Just as the priest reveals the form of the Lord clearly with the aarati flame, so too the guru reveals to us the divinity within each of us with the help of the “flame” of knowledge. At the end of the aarati, we place our hands over the flame and then touch our eyes and the top of the head. It means - may the light that illumined the Lord light up my vision; may my vision be divine and my thoughts noble and beautiful.

The philosophical meaning of aarati extends further. The sun, moon, stars, lightning and fire are the natural sources of light. The Lord is the source of this wonderful phenomenon of the universe. It is due to Him alone that all else exist and shine. As we light the flame of the aarati, we turn our attention to the very source of all light, which symbolizes knowledge and life.

Also the sun is the presiding deity of the intellect, the moon, that of the mind, and fire, that of speech. The Lord is the supreme consciousness that illuminates all of them. Without Him, the intellect cannot think, nor can the mind feel nor the tongue speak. The Lord is beyond the mind, intellect and speech. How can these finite equipment illuminate the Lord? Therefore, as we perform the aarati we chant;

Na tatra suryo bhaati na chandra taarakam  
Nemaa vidyuto bhaanti kutoyamagnib  
Tameva bhaantam anubhaati sarvam  
Tasya bhasa sarvam idam vibhaati

He is there where the sun does not shine,  
Nor the moon, stars and lightning.  
then what to talk of this small flame (in my hand),  
Everything (in the universe) shines only after the Lord,  
And by His light alone are we all illumined.

There are several other rituals that not described here. Try to learn them from other sources such as books or internet.





## Qualities of a Swayamsevak or Sevika

A Swayamsevak or a Sevika stands for a person who is self-motivated to do good for others and be a role model. Below are some of the qualities that we have to imbibe in us to become an ideal Swayamsevak/Sevika. Balagokulam's weekly and occasional activities help us to cultivate such qualities in us.

**One should respect to Parents, Guru (Teacher) and all living and non-living entities.** One should love towards self, family, friends, society and country. Remember the story of Sravana Kumar, who took care of his blind parents. He is our ideal, our role model.

**Be good and helpful to others.** Can you remember the best and ideal Swayamsevak? Yes, Lord Hanuman. He had all the good qualities like being the best of the learned, being helpful without expecting anything in return. There are a lot of such examples. Can you guess one more person whom you know was very helpful to others?

**Be punctual:** Always be punctual to Balagokulam, at Home, School and outside also. The Sun God never ever felt tired of rising in the morning or setting in the evening? Just imagine what will happen if the Sun or Wind God wanted to take a break?

**Be Disciplined** - From morning till evening, one should be organized. Plan your activities and follow them. Getting up early morning and chanting any shloka such as 'Karaagre vasate Lakshmi' is a good habit. Try to finish scheduled tasks in time. A simple habit of keeping our shoes in line wherever we leave them, whether at Home, Shakha, Temple or any place reflects your discipline. King Shivaji's soldiers, though less in number, could easily overcome Afzal Khan just because they were disciplined. Maintain cleanliness, be polite in speech and actions, etc. Can you think of some examples in our history who were role models in good habits like this?

**Be strong and healthy physically and emotionally.** Swayamsevak/sevika should be physically healthy. Strong mind can exist only in a healthy body. Weak body leads to a weak mind, which leads to negative thoughts.

**Good Character** - Non-violence, speaking truth, no stealing, non-indulgence or being selfless are some examples of Good Samskar or Good Character. Lord Rama had all these good qualities and many more. Read Ramayana - the story of Sri Rama. It has a lot to offer this world. Do you know Ramayana was translated

into lot of European, Asian languages? Sri Rama is considered an ideal person born on this Earth.

**Sharing and Caring** - It is said, by sharing one's wealth (knowledge, money or anything) with others, the value of the wealth increases. Whatever you possesses is not yours, but God's so always share with others.

**Seva/Service:** Swayamsevak should always be ready to serve others. Serving others makes man humble. One should always try to uplift others to bring them on your level. Remember the story of King Shibi who gave his everything to fulfill Brahman's demand.

**Respect for other's feelings and thoughts:** Swayamsevak/Sevika should always respect other's feelings and thoughts even though they are contradictory or conflicting with your thoughts.

**Self-confidence** - This is the most important for a Swayamsevak/Sevika. Doctorji, the founder of Sangh, was a person of self-confidence. The incidents from his childhood teach us, what a single individual can achieve. Once a person was being chased by a monkey. A person standing by shouted at this running person. "Stop running and chase the monkey". You can guess what happened next. The monkey started running.... Chatrapati Shivaji didnot have anything with him, when he took the oath of establishing a Hindu kingdom. With his mother and teacher's blessing, he could bring together thousands of Hindus and build a strong Hindu kingdom.

**Walk the Talk** - Always practice what you speak. The world respects those who can show in practice what they speak. A vessel half filled with stones makes more noise than the same vessel filled completely. A very familiar saying by Swami Ramdas reflects the same. He says – Bole Taisa Chale, Tyachi Vandavi Pavule (one who practices what he/she speaks is respectful).

**Friendly and Influential:** A Swayamsevak/Sevika should have many friends and the friends should be influenced by our character and behavior.

**Devotion or Shraddha** - This is the basis for all good work in the world. Without devotion, how much ever a person might achieve, it is useless. One should believe in what he/she is doing.

We should participate in regular balagokulam activities and try to inculcate these good qualities.





## : Exercise :-

**Match the Pairs**

- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1) Agajanana Padmarkam        | 1) Gajanana                        |
| 2) Song and Dance of Dharma   | 2) Upavaasa                        |
| 3) Ganesha                    | 3) Desire                          |
| 4) Fasting                    | 4) Manifestation of Supreme God    |
| 5) Gods/Goddesses/Deities     | 5) Saffron Flag                    |
| 6) Ganesha's mouse symbolizes | 6) Gajananam Aharnisham            |
| 7) Bhagva Dhvaj               | 7) is the shakha spirit of quality |

**Fill up the blanks**

- 1) Aarati is often performed with \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Chandan    b) Rock    c) Camphor    d) None of these
- 2) Upavasa means \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) eating twice    b) fasting    c) eating thrice    d) None of these
- 3) Strong mind can exists only in healthy \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) thoughts    b) body    c) braint    d) None of these
- 4) Ganesha's trunk is the symbol of \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Wisdom    b) High Strength    c) devotion    d) None of these
- 5) Ganesha's small eyes symbolize \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Forsight    b) Wisdom    c) devotion    d) None of these
- 6) Shanti roughly means a \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Noise    b) disturbance    c) peace    d) None of these

## Questions

1) Describe the symbolic meaning of Lord Ganesha.

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2) Describe any two good qualities of Swayamsevak.

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3) Why do we aarati? Described in short.

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4) Why do we regard trees as sacred?

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# Public Speaking

This is a bauddhik game to improve our public speaking or oratory skills. Shikshak should conduct this game. Friendly competition could be useful for motivation.

## **Self Introduction:**

Everyone will get one or two minutes to introduce himself/herself. Apply few criteria such as body language, eye contact, on what information he/she focusses on and its sequence, etc and give points. Shikshak is to determine who did the best job.

## **Talk Talk Talk.....**

Everyone will get one or two minutes (depending upon sankhya). He or she has to talk continuously for a given time. Talking should be relavant. Shikshak is to determine who did the best job.

## **Talk the talk (remember the talk):**

This is something like self introduction. This game can be played in the pairs of two. First one will tell about himself/herself such as hobbies, likes, dislikes, movies, food, etc. for one minute. Other person has to remember everything the first person said and repeat it.

## **Truth or lie:**

This is all about persuading your audience. One person will stand before the gana/group. He/She will tell a short story. After the story is told, the gana/group has to guess if it was the truth or lie.

## **Impromptu/charades:**

Everyone will be given impromptu topics and he/she has to speak about for 2 minutes on that topic

