



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



Syllabus

Year III, Quarter II

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's objective is to 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).

www.balagokulam.org

Table of Contents

April

Shloka / Subhashitam / Amrutvachan	4
Geet	5
Yugadi	6
Shri Ram.....	9
Shri Ram - A Role Model.....	11
Project - Charcha (Shri Ram and Ramayan)	14
Exercise	15

May

Shloka / Subhashitam / Amrutvachan	18
Geet	19
Lord Mahavira.....	20
Akshaya Tritiya	22
Vastu Shastra	24
Project - Mother's Day Greeting Card	27
Exercise	28

June

Shloka / Subhashitam / Amrutvachan	30
Geet	31
Shivaji - The Great	32
The Saptarshi.....	36
Vedic Astrology - The Role of Navagrahas.....	39
Project - Skit (Shivaji and Ramdas Swami).....	42
Exercise	44

Shloka

बुद्धिर्बलं यशो धैर्यं निर्भयत्वमरोगता ।
अजाड्यं वाक्पटुत्वं च हनूमत्स्मरणाद्भवेत् ॥

buddhirbalaṁ yaśo dhairyaṁ nirbhayatvamarogatā ।
ajāḍyaṁ vākpaṭutvaṁ ca hanūmatsmaraṇādbhavet ॥

Meaning: When we pray to bhagawan hanuman, we will be blessed with intellect, strength, fame, courage, fearlessness, freedom from all ailments, wisdom and diplomacy of speech.

Subhashitam (Words of wisdom)

नरस्याभरणं रूपं रूपस्याभरणं गुणः ।
गुणस्याभरणं ज्ञानं ज्ञानस्याभरणं क्षमा ॥

narasyAbharaNaM rupaM rupasyAbharaNaM guNaH ।
guNasyAbharaNaM GYaanaM GYaanasyAbharaNaM xamA ॥

Meaning: Handsomeness is the ornament of men; quality is the ornament of handsomeness; knowledge is the ornament of quality; (and) forgiveness is the ornament of knowledge.

Amrutvachan (Quotes)

We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live; they travel far.

- Swami Vivekananda



This land is my land

This land is your land This land is my land
 From Himalayas to Kanyakumari
 From Mumbai Gate way to East Meghalaya
 This land is made for you and me

It's rich in culture and rich in heritage
 With great poets and greater scriptures
 With great dancers and amazing singers
 This art is made for you and me

In various forms with many values
 Gods like Krishna and ideal Rama
 Devi Saraswati and strong Hanuman
 All gods to bless you and me

All the festival fun with family
 Like yugadi - holi and dasera
 Celebrating rakhi for universal brotherhood
 festivals to enrich you and me

With Thirty five states with unique languages
 Different foods and different vestments
 Looks like diversity but still is unity
 this land unites you and me

Its our dharma believe in giving
 Its now our turn to give back something
 Its our duty to preserve everything
 Which was given to you and me





Yugadi (Varsha Pratipada)

Festivals are an integral part of our life and culture and Hindu tradition offers them in plenty. There is a festival for every reason and for every season. Every celebration centers around rituals of prayer, seeking blessings, exchanging goodwill, decorating houses, wearing new clothes, music, dance and feasting. Do you know the most important festival that falls during March-April? It is Yugadi!!

Yugadi is one of the most important festival among numerous festivals that we celebrate. Yugadi means “Beginning of New age” (Yuga=Age and Aadi=beginning). Hindu culture is diverse and hindu people speak many languages. No wonder! this festival is recognized by various names and celebrated in various ways and on different days. Some called it as “Varsha Pratipada”, and some as “Gudi Padva. Some called it as “Naba Barsha” and some as “Goru Bihu”.

Yugadi comes close on the heels of festival Holi every year. While the strong colors of Holi start fading away, the freshness of spring lingers on with sprightliness all around. It is a spring festival when the Goddess of Nature gets bedecked as a divine bride. This season has a characteristic fragrance in the air; fully blossomed neem trees make the air healthy. We listen to chanting of birds and smell fragrance of flowers from distance. The onset of spring also marks a beginning of new life with plants (barren until now) acquiring new life, shoots and leaves. The vibrancy of life and verdant fields, meadows full of colorful blossoms signifies growth, prosperity and well-being.

The day of Yugadi is also a beginning of a new year according to the Hindu Panchang. You may be puzzled and ask, “What is Hindu Panchang?” Hindu Panchang is a Hindu Calendar. Just like English Calendar, Hindus also have their own calendar. They use it for the religious customs and ceremonies.

Since it is a start of new year, people launch many new projects, start new ventures, open new offices. They purchase jewelry, gold and other valuable things on this auspicious day.

Ways of celebrations

Hindus celebrate this festival in various ways. Preparations for the festival begin a week ahead. Houses are given a thorough wash. Shopping for new clothes and buying other items that go with the requirements of the festival are done with a lot of excitement. People wake up before the break of dawn, apply coconut oil on their skin and take a bath after which they decorate the entrance of their houses with fresh mango leaves and intricate rangoli designs reflecting the brightness of the spring. Wearing new clothes, they offer Pooja for the God and seek his blessings before they start the day. They pray for their health, wealth and prosperity and success in business too. Some people celebrate this festival by hoisting a gudi – a bamboo pole with a rich and gorgeous cloth of magenta or saffron color and a small branch of neem tree and garland. It symbolizes Shree Rama's triumphant entry into Ayodhya and is erected in homes as a mark of triumph of good over evil. It also symbolizes the bra-Mha-dhwa-j (flag of the Creator).



Some find a different way of celebrating the festival. Kavi Sammelanam (poetry recitation) is quite famous in southern Bharat (India). Yugadi is also a time when people look forward to a literary feast in the form of Kavi Sammelanam. Many poets come up with new poems written on subjects ranging from Yugadi to politics to modern trends and lifestyles.

As the day starts, they eat the paste of bitter-sweet leaves of Neem tree, tamarind and jaggery. The neem paste is believed to purify blood and build up immunity in the body against diseases. Special dishes such as “pulihora” (like tamarind rice), “bobbatlu” (sweet rotis), “Shrikhand” (like sweet yoghurt) are prepared for the occasion. Yugadi is thus a festival of many shades. It ushers in the new year, brings a rich bounce of flora and fills the hearts of people with joy and contentment.

Mythological and Historical Importance

It is believed that, on this day, the Universe was created by Lord Brahma. This is the day when Lord Vishnu incarnated himself as Matsya (the Fish Incarnation). On this day, Shri Rama killed Vali. The great Indian Mathematician Bhaskaracharya's calculations proclaimed the Yugadi day from the sunrise on as the beginning of the New Year, new month and new day. This day recalls the inspiring occasion when the kings Shalivahana and Vikramaditya defeated the barbaric forces of Shakas who came from Central Asia and invaded Bharat (India) during the 1st century A.D. The founding of new Eras in the names of Vikrama and Shalivahana signifies the supreme importance accorded to them in the Hindu history. And what a happy coincidence!! A great patriot, revolutionary and the founder of the organization - Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) , Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar was also born on this day of Yugadi.

Spiritual Significance

All the major Hindu festivals have their own purpose and significance, i.e., to show their relevance and importance in the context of the eternal world cycle of history. As mentioned earlier, people eat the paste of bitter-sweet leaves of Neem tree, tamarind and jaggery. Apart from its medicinal value the eating of this mixture has an inner significance. Jaggery represents joy and happiness and Neem represents sorrow. Mixture of them indicate that life is a mixture of good and bad, joy and sorrow, success and disappointment, and all of them have to be treated alike. Every one should resolve to face calmly whatever happens in this year, accepting it with good grace. Consider everything is for one's own good. Men should rise above sorrow and happiness, success and failure. Jaggery represents Krutayuga and Tretayuga which is full of purity, prosperity and peace. Neem represents Dwaparyuga and Kaliyuga which consists of sorrow, chaos and impurity. So, it is the time to change ourselves or to purify ourselves by inculcating the divine virtues.





Shri Ram

Whenever evil prevails and the entire universe is terrified by wicked forces and when there is no way out for the common people, Lord Vishnu comes to the rescue. HE incarnates himself into an appropriate form for the up-liftment of the good and virtuous, destruction of evil and re-establishment natural law (dharma).

Thousands of thousand years back, the demon king Ravana was challenging the righteousness. He was wealthy, powerful and mightiest king of the Earth at his time. He was very learned and accomplished person too. But he was evil and wicked. He used all his powers and knowledge for himself and his supporters. Naturally, he became a danger for all and Lord Vishnu had to incarnate himself to eliminate Ravana.

Lord Vishnu incarnated Himself as a Ram; an oldest son of the King Dashrath – the King of Ayodhya. Dasharath had four sons – Ram, Lakshman, Bharat and Shatrughna. All four brothers were learned and brave. Especially, Ram was dearest to all. Ram was married to Sita. To fulfill the desire of his mother Kaikeyi, Ram with his brother Lakshman and wife Sita, went to the forest for 14 years. During that period, the demon king Ravana abducted Sita and took her to his kingdom Lanka. Ram with the help of another king Sugreev fought with wicked Ravana and his army, defeated them and rescued Sita. Thus Lord Vishnu in form of Ram eliminated the demon Ravana and established the Dharma (natural law) again.

Ram Navami

Ram was born on the 9th day of the Hindu month Chaitra (March-April) in Ayodhya which is situated on the banks of the holy river – sarayu. Navami means 9th day. Since Ram was born on this day, it is called as Ram Navami. Hindus celebrate Ram Navami as a festival. It is dedicated to the memory of Shri Ram. Celebrations begin with a prayer to the Sun early in the morning, chanting vedik mantras dedicated to Lord Vishnu and offering flowers and fruits to the God. A



special prayer is performed at noon as Ram was born at mid-day (noon). Hindus keep a fast throughout the day, breaking it only at midnight. Public gatherings called satsang are organized and excerpts from the Ramacharitamanas, a book on Ram describing his powers, achievements, virtues and glory, are recited.

Hindus participate in a Ram Navami procession with a great zeal and passion. The main attraction of the procession is nicely decorated chariot in which four persons are dressed up as Ram, his brother Lakshman, his wife Sita and his disciple Hanuman. This chariot is accompanied by several other persons dressed up as Ram's soldiers. In Ayodhya, Ram's birth-place, almost all temples carry such processions. Ram leela (the play depicting the life events of Ram) are also organized at places.

The Ramayana

The Ramayana is one of the two Hindu epics; attributed to the great sage Valmiki. It consists of 24,000 verses categorized in 7 parts (kandas) describing the life of Shri Ram. The name "Ramayana" is a compound of two words "rama" and "ayana (going / advancing or travel)". In short, The Ramayana means – Ram's advancing (travel). The Ramayana is not just an ordinary story, but contains the teachings of ancient Hindu sages. It was first written in Sanskrit, but later converted in various Indian languages. It is popular not only in India, but the entire Indian sub-continent including south-east countries, particularly Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Malasia, Philippines and Vietnam. It is not just restricted to Hindus only. For instance, Muslims in Indonesia read Ramayana with a great devotion. Lots of Buddhist countries have a profound impact of the Ramayana.

Is it worth reading Ramayana today?

Today's world is a science world. Men have landed on the moon and now approaching Mars. Life styles and attitudes have changed completely. Is it really worth reading Ramayana today which was written thousands and thousands of years back? Are teachings from Ramayana really relevant in these days? These are often repeated questions. Answer is YES!! Science may alter the life style of human being; it may bring the materialistic prosperity but what will remain permanent and worthy are "Nature's Laws", "Moral Values". Human nature, emotions, moral values, problems will remain same today and in future. And the Ramayana and its Hero Shri Ram teach the moral values. He established the highest standards for the values and his personal conduct followed those values. One can look up the Ram's character to identify the solution to any problem in the world. It is worth reading or listening to the Ramayana even now to foster good values/character and to be a good man.





Shri Ram – A Role Model

Ram was one of the most wonderful and charismatic personality of the Indian history. He embodied all the virtues by practising what he preached. “Actions speak louder than Words” was his chief motto. More than his divine powers, his popularity, bravery, courage in face of all adversities, kindness, sense of justice, obedience, intelligence, limitless patience, boundless compassion and steadfast following of dharma (duty) have made him not only popular but endeared him to countless generations of Hindus and non-Hindus.

A Man or a God?

One may ask... was Ram a man or a God? Well!! He was both. He was a man as well as God. He was a God because he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. When Lord Vishnu took birth as a Ram, he could have skipped (avoided) the common man’s sufferings and daily duties and hence breaking the nature’s law. But he didn’t break it. Instead he went through all the sixteen sanskaras that Hindus have to go through. He enjoyed family life. And just like others, he also suffered in his life and died when his time came. That is why Ram was a man!!! He was full of virtues and extremely powerful with an ability of doing anything. Thus he was not just a man, but a super-man!!!!

Man of Virtues

Ram was full of virtues. He was a perfect man. He was an ideal son of king Dasharatha, an ideal king, an ideal husband, an ideal brother and an ideal friend . Ram was the epitome of morality, truth, virtue and chivalry. Let us try to learn here some of his virtues.

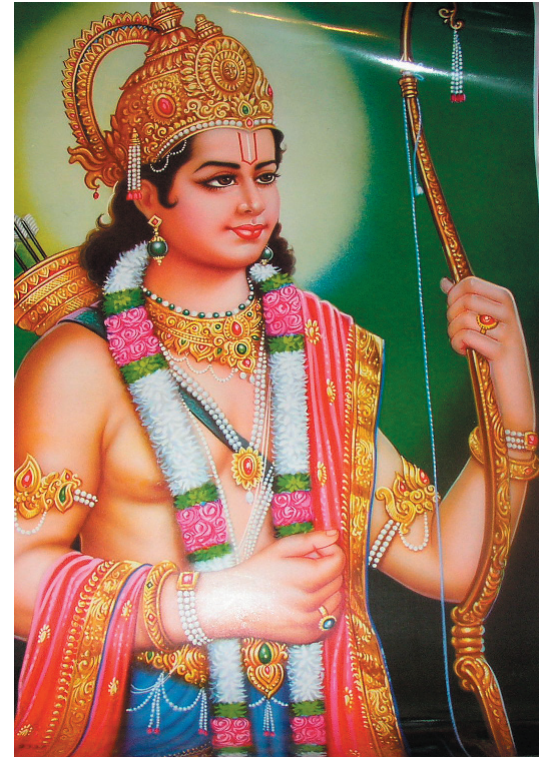
An ideal son

Ram was an ideal son of his parents (Father – King Dasharath, Mother – Queen Kausalya). He never ever disobeyed his parents. He would do anything to keep his parents happy. He knew that his parents would always do the right thing for him. When his second mother, Kaikeyi, wanted him to give up kingdom and go to the forest, he readily agreed to do so without a moment’s hesitation. He knew about the difficulties and dangers living in forest. But just to keep up his father’s promises, and mother Kaikeyi’s wish, he went to the forest. Besides, he didn’t even develop a slight bitterness about Kaikeyi. Without batting an eyelid, he sacrificed his palatial comforts, princely rights and all family happiness. He shed all material comforts as though they were dust. He smilingly endured the ardour of forest life for fourteen years but never swerved from his duty towards his parents.

An ideal brother

Ram was an ideal brother. He loved all his three brothers equally. While Ram was in the forest with Sita and brother Lakshaman, Bharat came to the forest to see him and possibly bring him back. When Lakshaman saw Bharat coming, he doubted him. He thought that Bharat's intentions were bad. But Ram was calm. He never ever doubted his brothers; neither raised questions about their intentions. He knew that Bharat's intentions were good and he was coming to see him.

Bharat was a son of Kaikeyi because of her Ram had to go in exile. Any common person would have developed bitterness and anger against them after such experiences. But Ram was an exception. He never developed bitterness or anger against both of them. In contrary, after exile, when he came back to Ayodhya, he touched Kaikeyi's feet first out of three mothers. In an another incident, during the war with the demon Ravana, Lakshaman became uncautious. When Ram saw Lakshman uncautious, he cried like a child and he was sitting by him until he became cautious. Even in exile, he gave preference to Sita and Lakshaman's likings.



An ideal friend

Ram had all qualities required for being an ideal friend. Kishkindha king Sugreeva and Ravana's brother Vibhishana were his friends. He helped Sugreeva to get his lost kingdom back. During a war with Ravana, his brother Vibhishana came to Ram's sanctuary. Ram gave him not only a protection but also considered him as a friend. After winning the war, instead of taking the control of Ravana's kingdom, he made Vibhishana a king.

An ideal husband

Ram was an ideal husband of his beloved wife Sita. When he decided to go in exile, he did not want Sita to follow him because she was not bonded with any promises and possibly she would not bear the hard-life in forest. He tried to persuade her. But when Sita followed him to the forest, he tried to soothe her life there by giving preferences to her likings. When Sita was missing, he wept like a child. He couldn't hold his emotions and he started asking whereabouts of Sita to everyone including plants and trees. And when he learnt that Sita was abducted by mighty demon king Ravana of Lanka, he went all the way to Lanka, fought valiantly with the Ravana and his army, destroyed them and rescued her. Eventhough Sita was under Ravana's custody, he didn't have a slight doubt about her character.

An ideal king

The very first duty of an ideal king is to take care of his kingdom and people. He suppose to give up everything for the sake of them. Ram was an ideal king of Ayodhya. While serving to people, he always considered his family secondary. Just because of a man from his kingdom doubted about Sita's character, he gave up her.

Ram was very popular. He achieved this by his innate charm, kindness, generosity and willingness to listen to other's problem. Ram was known to find swift, realistic and just answers for every one. His aura, charm and charisma made every one feel happy in his presence. Such is the glory of his memory that even now people invoke "Rama Rajya" as the ideal, utopian system. A system in which even the most humble may voice their opinion and be noticed. In Ram's kingdom, there were no criminals or oppressors and no one was ever oppressed. Every one had equal rights, justice was available to all. Taxes were not excessive and every one had work to occupy them. Rama had assured his people peace and plenty.

Maryada Purushottam

The entire universe is sustained by dharma (prescribed discipline or maryada or limitations). Having epitomized the highest discipline expected of Humans, Ram is called Maryada Purushottam (the Finest Specimen of a disciplined Human Being). He is an example of the highest of Human values, never deviating from the virtuous path in thought or action. Unlike Krishna, Ram lived his life within limitations (maryada) of being a human by not performing any miracles. He was capable of destroying all the demons alone but, he still studied to aquire different powers to fight evil. He also took the help of the Vanaras to find Sita and fight Ravana. His life is an example that by living rightiously, any human can do great things and become purushottam (the great among men).

A Warrior

No doubt!! Ram was a great warrior. He was second to none in bravery. He stood his ground in all adversities and fought for the cause of righteousness. Ram took his exile as a great challenge to explore new frontiers. Even in the jungles he fought for the rights of the oppressed. Knowing his enemies strong points as well as the weaknesses, Rama sought to rid the society of those who threatened to undermine it.

Physical beauty wanes with time, money is soon spent, fame is soon forgotten but generous deeds, great character and boundless compassion endure for all time. Ram is a good example. He will never be forgotten. Because of his's gigantic personality, Hindus have esteem regards for him. Even after thousands of thousand years past, Hindus worship Ram as a God and they consider him as a role model.





Charcha - Shri Ram and Ramayan

Discuss the virtues of Shri. Ram and the events that justify those virtues. Some are given below for a quick start.

1) **Patience**

Shri Ram was extremely patient. There is not a single event in his life where he was out of control.

2) **Obedience**

Shri Ram was an obedient son of his parents. On mother's wishes, he went to the forest. He never ever developed any bitterness about his parents.

3) Being Dutiful

4) Justice

5) Maryada Purushottam

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Discuss how teachings of the age-old Ramayana are still relevant in today's world. Few points are given below for a quick start.

1) It teaches eternal principles.

2) Materialistic things change; but "values" remain unchanged. And Ramayan teaches values.

3) As long as human-being exists, relationship (husband-wife, father-son, etc) exists. And Ramayan teaches how to follow (pursue) these relations.

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-: Exercise :-

Match the Pairs

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Yugadi | 1) Shri Ram's second mother |
| 2) Kaikeyi | 2) 9th day according to Hindu month |
| 3) Navami | 3) Beginning of new age |
| 4) Chaitra | 4) Hindu Calendar |
| 5) Panchang | 5) Shri Ram's brother |
| 6) Lakshman | 6) Shri Ram's father |
| 7) Dasharath | 7) Hindu Month |

Fill up the blanks

- 1) _____ was the birth place of Shri Ram.
a) Dwarika b) Ayodhya c) Delhi d) None of these
- 2) _____ and _____ followed Shri Ram to forest.
a) Bharat b) Lakshman c) Sita d) None of these
- 3) _____ was a friend of Shri Ram.
a) Angad b) Sugreeva c) Hanuman d) None of these
- 4) The Ramayana is a story of _____.
a) Shri Ram b) Krishna c) Buddha d) None of these
- 5) The Ramayana consists of _____ verses.
a) 24000 b) 10000 c) 5000 d) None of these
- 6) The Ramayana is divided in _____ categories (kandas).
a) 5 b) 6 c) 7 d) None of these

Objective Questions

1) Describe the significance of the festival Yugadi.

2) Shri Ram was a man as well as God. How?

3) Describe any two virtues of Shri Ram.

4) Is it worth reading Ramayana these days?

Questions for research

(Note that the 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, Shikshaks, Books or Internet)

1) How old the Ramayana is?

Shloka

श्रीराम राम रामेति रमे रामे मनोरमे ।
सहस्रनाम तत्तुल्यम रामनाम वरानने ॥

shrIrAma rAma rAmeti rame rAme manorame |
sahasranAma tattulyama rAmanAma varAnane ||

Meaning: Chanting the name of Shriram constantly enjoys me. The holy name of Shriram is equal to one thousand holy names of Shri Vishnu. (Lord Shiva uttered above lines to Goddess Parvati in praise of Shri Ram)

Subhashitam (Words of wisdom)

उद्यमः साहसं धैर्यं बुद्धिः शक्तिः पराक्रमः ।
षडेते यत्र वर्तन्ते तत्र देवः सहायकृत् ॥ ॥

udyamaH sAhasaM dhairyaM buddhiH shaktiH parAkramaH |
ShaDete yatra vartante tatra devaH sahAyakRut ||

Meaning: Diligence, enterprise, fortitude, intelligence, power, bravery; where these six exist, the destiny becomes helpful.

Amrutvachan (Quotes)

“The earth is enjoyed by heroes”—this is the unfailing truth. Be a hero. Always say, “I have no fear.”

- Swami Vivekananda



This land is my land

This land is your land This land is my land
 From Himalayas to Kanyakumari
 From Mumbai Gate way to East Meghalaya
 This land is made for you and me

It's rich in culture and rich in heritage
 With great poets and greater scriptures
 With great dancers and amazing singers
 This art is made for you and me

In various forms with many values
 Gods like Krishna and ideal Rama
 Devi Saraswati and strong Hanuman
 All gods to bless you and me

All the festival fun with family
 Like yugadi - holi and dasera
 Celebrating rakhi for universal brotherhood
 festivals to enrich you and me

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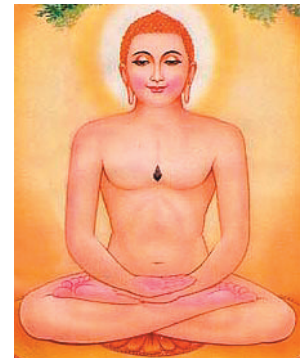




Lord Mahavira

Lord Mahavira was born in 599 B.C. at Kshatriyakund (near Vaishali city of India). His father's name was King Siddhartha and his mother's name was Queen Trishala. They were very religious people and were followers of Lord Parshvanath. Queen Trishala had fourteen dreams (some believe sixteen dreams) when she conceived Lord Mahavira. While she was pregnant, the prosperity of King Siddhartha grew. The parents attributed their success to the baby. So when the baby was born, he was named Vardhaman, which means continuously increasing.

Vardhaman was very bold. While playing he once saved his friends from a snake. Another time, a heavenly angel joined them in the disguise of a young boy. According to the rules of the game, Vardhaman had a chance to ride on the boy's back. While he was riding, the boy turned into a monster in order to scare him. Vardhaman however overcame the monster. The heavenly angel then appeared in his true form. He praised Vardhaman for his boldness and called him "Mahavira" meaning very brave.



Though Mahavira was born with worldly comforts and luxuries, they never attracted him. He lived a simple life. So when his parents died, he decided to be a monk. He asked for permission from his brother. His brother was still mourning the loss of their parents. He therefore requested Mahavira to wait for a couple of years before leaving. Mahavira waited for two years, during which he led a totally detached life. After realizing this, his brother gave him permission to become a monk. Mahavira was thirty years old when he gave up his worldly life and all worldly activities. He spent most of his time in austerity and in meditation. He suffered a great deal of physical pain and torture from various sources. Among them, the most severe was the biting by the highly poisonous snake Chandakaushik. Lord Mahavira remained calm and peaceful in the midst of all these torturous events. He never lost his serenity and never developed hatred for anyone. He magnanimously forgave all of them. He led such a highly austere life for twelve and a half years. At the age of forty-two he attained omniscience, Kevaljnan. He became Jina, the twenty-fourth Tirthankar of the present era. As omniscient he knew everything of the past present and future.

As the last Tirthankar, he revived the religious order (Tirth) consisting of monks, nuns, Shravaks and Shravikas. This order is known as the Jain Sangh. His first disciple, called Ganadhar, was Gautamswami. He was a well known Brahmin scholar of the time. Lord Mahavira had eleven Ganadhars. Those Ganadhars compiled twelve scriptures based on what Lord Mahavira taught. These scriptures are called Agamas which were passed verbally from preceptor to pupil for a long time. They were put into writing about 890 years after the death of Mahavira.

During the time of Lord Parshvanath there were four great vows followed by monks and nuns. Realizing the status of mind of current and future sadhus and sadhvis, Lord Mahavira added one more vow to them. The five vows are:

- 1) Non-violence (Ahimsa) 2) Truth (Satya)
- 3) Non-stealing (Asteya) 4) Chastity (Brahmacharya, added by Mahavira)
- 5) Non-possession (Aparigraha).

During his times violent sacrificial rituals were conducted by people in the name of religion. The teachings of Lord Mahavir opened their eyes, and they also adopted the principle of non-violence. His sermons encouraged people to build a happy and harmonious society.

After offering guidance to the people for thirty years, Lord Mahavira attained Nirvān in 527 B.C., at the age of seventy-two. Nirvana means that he attained liberation and became a Siddha who no longer has to undergo the cycle of birth and death.

The birthday of Lord Mahavira is observed by both the Digambra (Sky-clad) and Svetambra (White-clad) Jains on the 13th day of the bright half of the Chaitra month (March-April).

This birth anniversary is celebrated throughout the Jain world in the country, but it is celebrated with special charms in Rajasthan and Gurjarat, where the Jains are relatively in greater number than in the other states. Jaina Shrines at Girnar and Palitana in Gujarat and at Mahavirji in Rajasthan. Pawapuri and Vaishali Bihar are the other such centres. Vaishali being his birth place, a grand festival is held there, and it is known as vaishali Mahotsava. On this auspicious day grand chariot processions with the images of Mahavira are taken out, rich ceremonies in the temples are held, fasts and charities are observed, Jaina scriptures are read and a some places grand fairs are set up.





Akshaya Tritiya

For any important occasion, Hindus go through the Hindu Panchang (calendar) to find 'muhurat' (auspicious time) to start. But there are three and half days in the Hindu Panchang which are all time auspicious. Any significant occasion or venture can be started on those days. Akshaya Tritiya is one of those three and half auspicious days.

Akshaya Tritiya is the third day in the bright fortnight of Vaishaakha month of the Hindu Panchang which comes around April-May timeframe. As described earlier, it is one of the three and half most all time auspicious days on which Hindus do not have to see Panchang for the 'muhurats'. The other two and half days are Vijayadashami (Dassera), Yugadi (Varsha Pratipada) and a half day of Bali Pratipada which is the 4th day Deepavali.

Akshaya means unperishable or eternal. Any auspicious activities and austerities started on this day would be fruitful. It is said that Treta Yuga (Shri Ram's Yuga) or Satya Yuga began on this day. This is the day when Ved-Vyasa along with Lord Ganesha started writing the Mahabharata; one of the great epics of Hindus.

On this day, Hindus bathe in a sacred river, give charity, perform japa (meditation) and offer barley in a sacred fire, and offer barley preparations to the deity. They worship Lord Ganesha. Business people start the new audit book with the worship of Lord Ganesha and Devi Lakshmi. These traditional rituals are then followed with welcoming customers and holding dinner. Sweets and new year calendars are distributed to guests.

Story of a Brahmana

Here is one story of a brahmana who had a very good wife but was poor. Whatever little money he got would get spent somehow. Also he did not have children. He was suffering.

So under the strong request of his wife Brahmna went to sage Vashishta

to know the reason behind his suffering. Sage Vashishta told him that in his previous life he was very rich and also had many children. But he was very stingy, he did not even spend for his own children. This is the reason for him being poor and also without children. Then brahmana asked sage Vashishta why he got a good wife. The sage replied that, he had observed the vrata of Vaishakha month for the last 5 days. So he got a good wife and also a good birth.

Then Brahmana requested the sage to show him a way to get rid of current suffering. The sage advised him to follow at least the last 7 days left of Vaishakha month, with devotion to Lord Krishna.

The brahmana observed the vrata of Vaishakha month for at least the left out 7 days, his family grew and he also became rich. Ultimately with the blessings of supreme Godhead, he went back to the spiritual world!

The Story from Puranas

In the “Puranas”, the holy Hindu scriptures, there is a story where Ved Vyasa once requested Lord Ganesha to help him compose the Mahabharata. Lord Ganesha accepted the offer only after laying down his own terms. He said Ved Vyasa that he would write the “Shlokas” only if Ved Vyasa would tally with his speed. If he had to stop due to Ved Vyasa, he would discontinue writing. Ved Vyasa accepted the proposal with counter conditions, stating that Lord Ganesha had to comprehend the meaning of the “Shlokas” before he could pen them down. All terms and conditions agreed upon, Ved Vyasa started composing the epic Mahabharata and used very complicated Shlokas. The time lord Ganesha took to understand the meaning was enough for Ved Vyasa to compose new lines (shlokas).

Bright Births

On this day Lord Vishnu incarnated as Parashurama. The river Ganga descended on earth on this day. It is also believed that people born during this time shine bright in life. Many great personalities were born during this period: Basaveshwara born on May 4, Ramanujacharya and Adi Shankaracharya on May 6, Swami Chinmayananda on May 8 and Lord Buddha on May 16.





Vastu Shastra

Vastu is the ancient Hindu science of design and architecture with roots in Vedic philosophy. Vastu in Sanskrit means nature, a surrounding or environment. The principles of Vastu Shastra evolved over thousands of years of experience and foresight of ancient Hindu sages and are very valuable for the well being of mankind even in the present day.

The principles for constructing buildings were laid down taking into consideration the Pancha Bhootas (five elements), namely Earth, Space, Air, Fire and Water. The gravitational and magnetic effects and rotational influences of Sun, Moon, Earth and other planets on the life in Earth were also considered. Keeping in mind these factors ensured that there is balance and harmony between man, nature and his buildings and thereby ensured peace, prosperity and happiness.

There is an interesting story in the Matsya Purana in which the birth of the Vastu Purusha is narrated. By reading that story one knows why the worship of the Vastu Purusha is necessary before beginning constructing any house.

There once lived a brutal demon who caused havoc on the terrestrial and celestial worlds alike. Even Lord Brahma, Shiva and other Rakshashas (demons) were terrified. Lord Brahma along with 45 celestial beings encircled the demon and pinned him down with each celestial being sitting at a specific position where he now lives in the mandala.

The demon then asked Lord Brahma to grant him some relief since it would be impossible to stay like that. Eventually Brahma declared that he would gain fame as "Vastu Purusha" as the Lord of Construction. Not only that Brahma also insisted that Vastu Purusha was to ensure the happiness of those who offered prayers and solicited his blessings before construction.

The 45 deities remained in position and became associated with each direction. Lord Brahma finally said that all buildings should be oriented and constructed in such a manner that they kept both the presiding deities and the Vastu Purusha happy, comfortable and contented.

The principal Gods/ presiding deities of each direction also called the Ashtadikpala are:

- **Northeast (Eeshanya):** Ruled by Lord of all quarters or Eeshwara Siva (Religions, Luck and Faith).

- **East (Aditya):** Ruled by Sun God - Aditya (Seeing the world)
- **Southeast (Agni):** Ruled by Lord of Fire - Agni (Energy Generating)
- **South (Yama):** Ruled by Lord of Death - Yama (Damaging)
- **Southwest (Pitru):** Ruled by ancestors (History)
- **West (Varuna):** Ruled by Lord of water (Physical)
- **Northwest (Vayu):** ruled by Lord Of Winds (Advertisement)
- **North (Kubera):** Ruled by Lord of Wealth (Finance)
- **Centre (Brahma):** Ruled by Lord/Creator of the Universe (Desire)

Who does not want all the above things in life?? Few main recommended principles of Vastu Shastra are...

1. Marma Sthana's - these are the most sensitive parts on Vastu Purusha's body - the heart, chest and navel. These points orient around the center of any building, which is also the Brahmasthan (Lord Brahma's position). Therefore heavy structures such as pillars, beams, walls, doors, and closets should not be positioned at these points. As a reverence to Lord Brahma, the center should be kept clean, open and level.
2. The head of the Vastu Purusha is in the Northeast direction; this area of a building should be kept open and cool. Therefore it is an ideal place to have a water source.
3. The arms are to the left and right of the head, facing north and east. These areas should be as open as possible, making the Vastu Purusha Comfortable.
4. The Vastu Purusha's thighs are in the south and west corners. As thighs are capable of bearing more weight, storage closets, stairs etc can be placed here.
5. The kitchen should be placed in southeast, as this is the direction of Agni (fire).
6. Windows and Doors should be placed in the northwest to allow fresh air and help Vastu Purusha to breathe easily.
7. Finally southwest is where his feet lie. This part of the building should be higher than the level of the house.

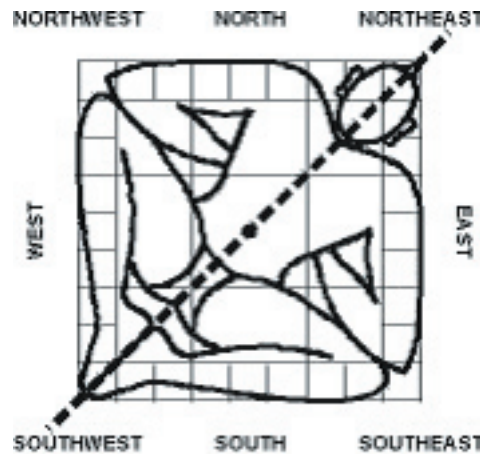
These principles are nothing but directional logic applied in a simplified form so that the consequent buildings are not only nature friendly but also draw cosmic energy. For example as the sun moves from east to west a home or building designed according to Vastu, will receive the most beneficial rays of Sun at all times. How healthy is that!!

An intelligent application of the principles of Vastu can insulate us from the negative influences related to health and well being and at the same time promote peace and harmony

leading to spiritual well being. There are however no references in scriptures that the absence of Vastu itself in no way will lead to negative influences on individuals living in such an atmosphere.

Where Ayurveda harmonizes the individual (mind, body, and soul), and Jyotish (Astrology) harmonizes the individual with the planets and cosmos, Vastu harmonizes the individual with his home and earth, and their relationship to the planets and cosmic harmony.

Vastu Purusha in the Mandala



Vastu Placement of Rooms in a Home

(Directions same as above)

granery	treasurey	puja
shed		living
dining	courtyard	bath
study		food store
clothes	bedrooms	pantry
tools		kitchen



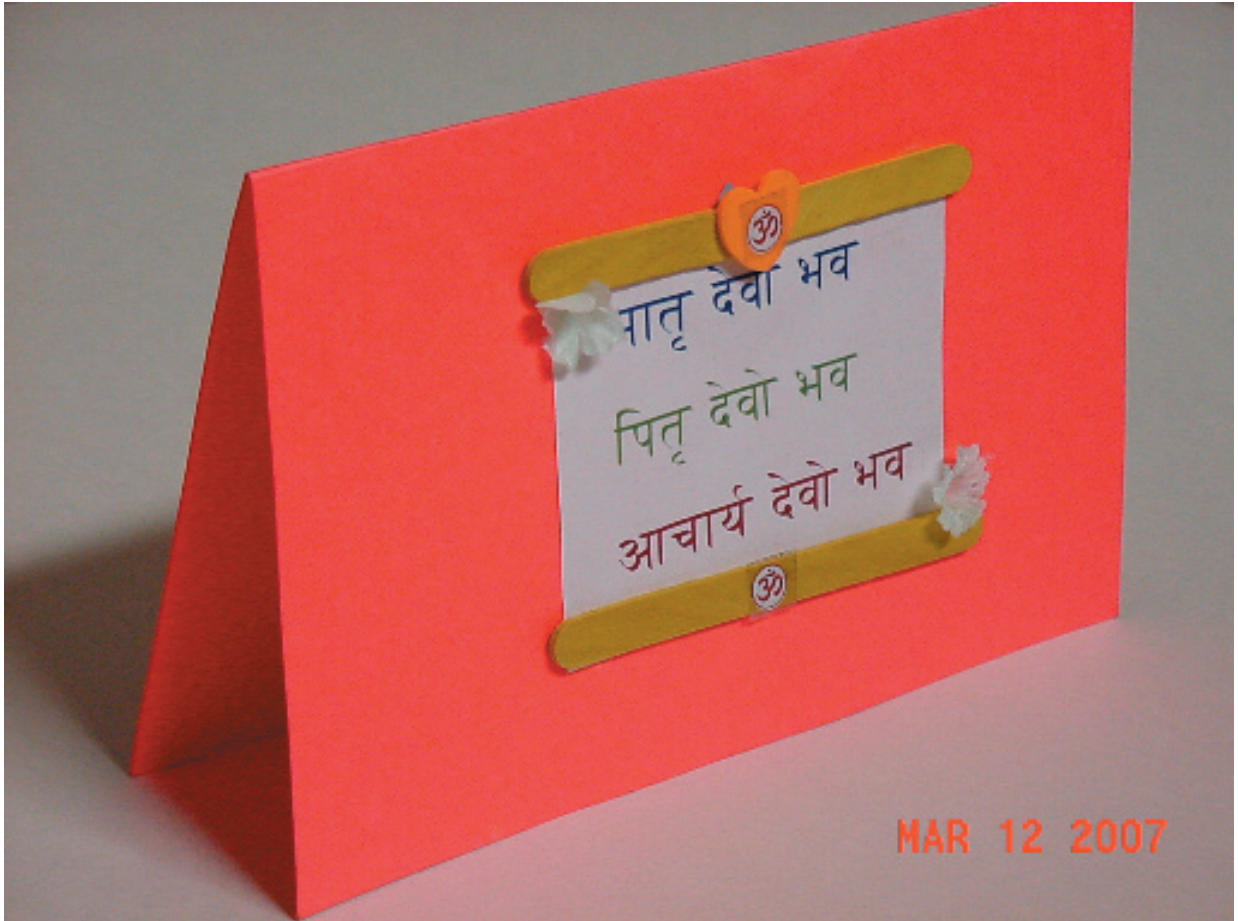


Mothers Day - Greeting card/wall hanging

॥ मातृ देवो भव ॥	Matru Devo Bhava	Mother is God
॥ पितृ देवो भव ॥	Pitru Devo Bhava	Father is God
॥ आचार्य देवो भव ॥	Aacharya Devo Bhava	Teacher is God

Material: Greeting card paper (or index card), 2 popscicle sticks, glue and silk flowers etc for decoration.

Procedure: 1) Fold the card paper into half. Write the above message on a plain paper. Cut the message and glue it on the centre of the greeting card. 2) Stick popscicle sticks on the top and bottom of the message. 3) Decorate it with plastic flowers or any other decorative material. User your creativity here. 4) Your greeting card is done. Give it your mother on mother's day. This is good enough for Father's day too! **Note:** Adjust the message size according to the greeting card or the popscicle sticks for hanging.





-: Exercise :-

Match the Pairs

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Vardhaman | 1) pitru devo bhava |
| 2) Akshaya | 2) auspicious time |
| 3) matru devo bhava | 3) Lord Mahavira |
| 4) muhurat | 4) non-violence |
| 5) ahimsa | 5) truth |
| 6) satya | 6) Lord Mahavira's father |
| 7) King Siddhartha | 7) Unperishable (eternal) |

Identify true or false

- 1) Vastu Purush is a lord of construction.
- 2) Vastu Shastra is based on five elements.
- 3) Vastu harmonizes the individual with his home and earth.
- 4) Lord Ganesha started writing the epic Mahabharat on the day of Yugadi.
- 5) Akshaya Tritiya is one of the three and half muhuratas.
- 6) Lord Vishnu incarnated as Parashurama on the day of Akshaya Tritiya.

Objective Questions:

- 1) What are the panch bhootas (five elements)?

2) What are the three and half muhuras according to Hindu Panchang?

3) What are the two branches of Jain faith?

4) What are the five vows according to Jain faith?



Shloka

कायेन वाचा मनसेन्द्रियैर्वा । बुद्धयात्मना वा प्रतिस्वभावात् ।
करोमि यद्यत् सकलं परस्मै । नारायणायेति समर्पयामि ॥

kAyena vAchA manasendriyairvA | buddhayAtmanA vA pratisvabhAvAt |
karOmi yadyat sakalaM parasmai | nArAyaᅇAyeti samarpayAmi ||

Meaning: Whatever I perform with my body, speech, mind, senses, intellect or my inner self either intentionally or unintentionally, I dedicate it all to that Supreme Bhagawan Narayana.

Subhashitam (Words of wisdom)

पदे पदे च रत्नानि योजने रसकुपिकाः ।

भाग्यहीना न पश्यन्ति बहुरत्ना वसुंधरा ॥

pade pade cha ratnAni yojane rasakupikAH |
bhAgyahInA na pashyanti bahuratnA vasuMdhara ||

Meaning: There are gems from step to step (every step); there are cups of juice at every yojan (mile); but the unfortunate ones do not realize them. The earth has numerous gems.

Amrutvachan (Quotes)

All power is within you. You can do anything and everything. Believe in that. Do not believe that you are weak; do not believe that you are half-crazy lunatics, as most of us do nowadays. Stand up and express the divinity within you.

- Swami Vivekananda



This land is my land

This land is your land This land is my land
 From Himalayas to Kanyakumari
 From Mumbai Gate way to East Meghalaya
 This land is made for you and me

It's rich in culture and rich in heritage
 With great poets and greater scriptures
 With great dancers and amazing singers
 This art is made for you and me

In various forms with many values
 Gods like Krishna and ideal Rama
 Devi Saraswati and strong Hanuman
 All gods to bless you and me

All the feastival fun with family
 Like yugadi - holi and dasera
 Celebrating rakhi for universal brotherhood
 festivals to enrich you and me

With Thirty five states with unique languages
 Different foods and different vestments
 Looks like diversity but still is unity
 this land unites you and me

Its our dharma believe in giving
 Its now our turn to give back something
 Its our duty to preserve everything
 Which was given to you and me





Shivaji - The Great

A young prince is seated on the throne. His soldiers have brought a handcuffed Patil (a village chief) before him. Patil, with a thick and long moustache, had dishonored a helpless widow. In a stern and majestic tone the Young prince announced the judgment, “cut off his both hands and feet!! This is the least punishment for the crime he has committed”. All present were taken aback at the firm devotion of the prince to justice. Not only were they wonder-struck but also pleased beyond measure. The village people began to say to one another: ‘Ah! Look! How devoted to justice our young prince is!’ He is not in the least afraid of the wicked people. He is kind and loving towards the poor, the downfallen and the wretched. He is ever determined to help them and to protect them. What is more, he regards all women as mothers!

Don’t you wish to know who this young prince was? He was none other than Shivaji. At the time of this incident he was just fourteen. In another incident... in Nachani village of Pune province, a ferocious and huge cheetah was creating nuisance. He used to attack villagers suddenly and run away into the jungle. Scared villagers ran to Shivaji for help. They cried, “Save us from this wild animal. He has killed so many children. He attacks us especially in the night!”. After patiently listening to villagers, he said, ‘don’t worry!! Calm down. I am here to help you’. Shivaji, with his chieftain Yesaji and few soldiers, went to the jungle. As soon as the cheetah appeared, Shivaji’s soldiers frightened and backed off. But Shivaji and Yesaji bravely confronted the Cheetah and killed him in no time. Villagers rejoiced and hailed, “Jay Shivaji!!”

Shivaji’s father name was Shahaji. He was always away from home, fighting wars. How he became aware of this fearless and unique nature of his son is itself an interesting story. On a certain occasion, Shahaji took his son to the court of the Sultan of Bijapur. Shahaji and all others touched the ground thrice and saluted the Sultan. He asked his son Shivaji to do the same thing. But.....! Shivaji stood erect with his head unbent. He seemed to be determined that he would not bow down to a foreign ruler. He walked back from the court with a lion-like gait and bearing.

How did Shivaji acquire all these noble virtues - courage, heroism,

love of the motherland and Dharma? Even when he was a little child, his mother Jijabai used to tell him stories of heroes, of sages who appear in the Ramayana, and the Mahabharatha. She taught him all about Hindu Samskars and patriotism. As Shivaji listened to these tales of heroism and Dharmik deeds, he grew more and more eager to be like Rama or Krishna, Bheema or Arjuna. His teacher, Dadoji Kondadev was a great man. He not only taught Shivaji about all kinds of warfare tactics but also about politics and good administration. Both, Dadoji kondadev and Jijabai, carved his personality.

Though shivaji was a prince, he enjoyed playing with anyone of his age and easily mixed up with the common peple. Soon, he became the heart of all. At the age of twelve, He and his friends took the oath of defeating foreign rulers and establish swarajya where people can live fearless and happy and follow their dharma. At the young age of sixteen, he started raising his own army. In the same age, he captured one of the forts. It was the fort of Torana. Another meaning of Torana is garland. Jijabai proudly said, 'look! Shivaji has brought us a garland of independence!''.

As Shivaji grew old, he fought many wars and defeated several lieutenants and commanders of foreign rulers. He not only established his independent sovereign against all odds but also undertook reforms to make his people happy. He inspired and united the common man to fight against the tyranny of foreign rulers such as Aurangjeb, by inculcating a sense of pride and nationality in them. Isn't it great about Shivaji? Sant (sage) Ramadas was his spiritual guru (teacher). He sang in praise of Shivaji: "The land and its Dharma have been uplifted. A kingdom of bliss has arisen." Why Shivaji was so successful?

Though there are several reasons, one of the most important reasons is his warfare strategy.



Warfare strategies and tactics

Shivaji was a great visionary and had lot of zeal to accomplish his mission.

Shivaji seemed to be successful in reading the minds of enemies. He adopted guerilla warfare. He believed in sudden attack, make damage and run away before enemy gets alert. Speed was his mantra. He would leave the enemy miles behind after he carried out the strikes. His ultimate aim was absolute victory for which he would not mind a tactical retreat or to step back and run away from the battle whenever required.

Shivaji was a meticulous planner. He developed a well-oiled network of spies across Bharat to keep the track of all the activities of the power centers of enemies. His strong intelligence network was the basis of his victory. He conducted ambitious operations like joint attack using cavalry, army and navy. He was aggressive. He preferred to attack enemy rather than sitting defensive. As and when required, he took bold but safe decisions. Unlike other rulers, he discouraged use of slow animals like elephant and camels in his army. He preferred horses. His favorite quote was... *“yasya ashwah tasya medini”*. Shivaji developed new forts that were invincible. He built more than 140 forts in his lifetime. A unique record in itself!! These forts were his power.

Though Shivaji was a warrior, he was religious too. He visited spiritual places and sought the blessings of spiritual persons. Despite all these, he never mixed religion with politics. Neither did he allow anybody to bring the religion or castism in administration.

Unique King

In his private life, his moral virtues were exceptionally high. Shivaji did not spare the enemies when captured, neither did he show any kindness to them. He preferred to take active part in all battles rather than just sitting on the throne and ordering his generals and commanders. That is why all his ministers, commanders and soldiers truly loved him. They were even ready to sacrifice their lives for him. Immediately after coronation, he started his digvijaya by attacking inner pockets of Mughal kingdom instead of enjoying Aristocracy. He defended the honor of enemy's women. But when Shivaji captured a daughter-in-law of Subhedar of Kalyan, he not only saved her, but sent her back to her house with all respect.

Coronation

Shivaji coronated himself after insisting by his family members, people and a prominent Brahmin. As soon as Shivaji declared himself as a king,

several aristocrats and warriors from various parts of Bharat joined him. As all kings do, Shivaji also regulated his own currency - Shivarai hon. To eradicate foreign (persian) words from the administration, he published a Rajvyavahar Kosh (a glossary of equivalent words with Samskrit origin) and implemented it in his kingdom. He established the Ashta Pradhan Mandal (a Council of 8 Ministers) to serve the people properly and effectively. Each minister was given the responsibility of major departments like administration, military affairs, etc.



A caretaker of Praja (people)

Whatever it takes, Shivaji always used to take care of his people. His people were his first concern. He introduced a new system of revenue collection. He regulated dual tax structure where different brackets of taxes were prevalent depending on the condition of soil/land (whether irrigated or barren). He never ever increased taxes or put burden of paying taxes on people. He provided all kinds of help to farmers. In the days of scarcity, he spent money from the govt's treasury and provided food and shelter to people. He dug wells, lakes and constructed water tanks, new temples across his kingdom. He gave all types of facilities to the families of soldiers who died in the battle. He had a good espionage system. He stopped the practice of slavery which was prevalent in Bharat. He imposed severe punishment for the trading of bonded labor. He gave full protection to women. Women fearlessly moved around in his tenure. He gave extreme punishment to criminals (accused) for their misbehavior and crime and while giving justice he did not even spare his own relatives.

Shivaji, such a great king, lived around 50 years. He was born in the year 1630 and took his last breath in the year 1680. All his life, he cherished a dream of Hindavi Swarajya and brought it into reality. He has been a source of inspiration and pride to the past generations and will continue to inspire today and future generations too.





The Saptarshi

The Saptarshi means seven rishis (sages) in Sanskrit. The seven rishis who are extolled at many places in the Hindu literature. They are regarded as the patriarchs of the Vedic Dharma. They are also called as Maharshi (great sage). Some of these Rishis are the ancestors of Hindus. For example, a man belongs to Atri Gotra (family or ancestor name) means Rishi Atri was an ancestor of that man. Let us try to learn more about these Saptarshi.

Rishi Atri

Atri maharshi is one of the ten sons of the creator Lord Brahma and first of the saptarshi. Atri's wife is Anasuyaa, a daughter of Kardama Prajapati. They had three sons: Dattatreya, Durvasa and Soma. Shri Rama, the son of Dasaratha, visited Atri Maharshi's Ashram during his fourteen years of exile. It was Atri who showed the way to Dandakaranya forest to Shri Rama. Atri Maharshi is considered to be one of the great discoverers of sacred Mantras of Hindu Dharma. Atri-samhita and Atri-smriti are two works attributed to Atri. Atri's wife is Anusaya. She was an embodiment of chastity. They lived in South Kailash. Rishi Atri, born in the lineage of the Moon. He is the traditional Rig Veda Sage of Ayurveda.

When Lord Brahma ordered Atri Rishi to create the world, he with his wife Anusaya went to Riksh Parvat (mountain) to do tapasya (penance). There he prayed Lord Vishnu that "He may bestow me with the children like Himself". Pleased with his penance, not just Lord Vishnu but all trinity-gods appeared there. Then Atri Muni said - "I bow you and respect you but I, with the desire of children, meditated only for one Shri Hari. Then how come that you three appeared before me?" Hearing this Trinity smiled and said - "You were meditating whoever, He is we three. Therefore you will have we three in our Ansh-Roop as your sons and we will expand your lineage." When the time came Brahma's Ansh appeared as Chandramaa, Vishnu's ansh appeared as Dattatreya, and Mahadev's ansh appeared as Durvaasa Rishi in Rishi Atri's house.

Rishi Bharadvaja

Bharadvaja was one of the great sages (rishis) whose accomplishments are detailed in the Puranas. The descendants of Bharadvaja use Bhardwaj as their surname and their population is mainly situated in Northern India, Tamilnadu and Kerala. He was the father of Dronacharya (Guru of Kauravas and Pandavas). It is said that the Marudwaja gods found him abandoned as a baby. They adopted and taught him all they knew about Vedas.

But Bharadvaja wanted to learn more. So he meditated upon Indra. He performed rigorous penance for years resulting in his body becoming weak, and eventually he found

it impossible to even sit. One day as Bharadwaja fell down meditating, Indra appeared. Bharadwaja was filled with joy. Indra asked Bharadwaja, "You already gained more knowledge than Gods. Vedic knowledge is endless. While gaining knowledge is important, spreading it among the people is equally important." Bharadwaja decided that spreading the Vedic knowledge among the people and freeing society from poverty, disease and war were his life's objectives. He traveled far and wide and took many virtuous kings as his disciples. Prominent among them were Abhayavarti and Divodasa. He helped the virtuous kings in times of peril, using his supreme knowledge and the help of the gods.

Bharadwaja was also adopted by the Emperor Bharata, the son of Dushyanta and Shakuntala. Though he could have taken over the vast kingdom of Bharata, the great sage Bharadwaja had no interest in worldly affairs. Bharadwaja married Susheela and had a son called Garga, who was well versed in the Vedas and the Upanishads. It is said that when Bharadwaja's time in this world came to an end, the celestial gods showered flowers on the couple and Indra came on his divine chariot, offered his respect to this great personality and took them to heaven.

Rishi Gautama

Gautama was a great philosopher and logician who wrote the Nyaya Sutras, considered to be the foundation of the Nyaya school of philosophy. The ultimate aim of Gautama and his wife Ahilya's life was penance and good of others. Once there was a drought. Gautama Rishi made a pit and filled it with water by praising Varuna Deva. Seeing this, all were very happy but the wives of other sages staying in the vicinity started feeling jealous. They made a conspiracy by persuading their husbands, to drive Gautam Rishi and his wife out of the area. All the sages came together and started worshipping Lord Ganesha. Lord Ganesha pleased with their devotion assumed form and being told the boon to be granted dissuaded the sages from doing so. Nevertheless, when the sages did not listen he blessed them accordingly and vanished.

Accordingly, Lord Ganesha assumed the form of a cow, entered the courtyard of Gautam Rishi's house, and started eating grass and plants. Incidentally, Rishi Gautam came there and started eschewing the cow with a thick stick. As soon as the stick touches the cow, the cow dropped down dead. Unfortunately, that moment the other wicked sages came there and criticized Gautam Rishi for his cruelty. They told him to leave this place and go away. Gaumtam Rishi humbly told them that he was ready to take the punishment for the crime committed. The sages suggested that he should circumambulate the earth thrice, the Mountain Brahmagiri 100 times, holy bath in the Ganges and worshipping of 1 crore Shivalingas. After performing this penance, Lord Ashutosh appeared before them. Sage Gautam asked to be freed from the crime.

Lord Shiva said "O Sage Gautam you were always innocent and pure. The other sages in reality made a conspiracy against you. Listening to this, Sage Gautama was surprised,

but said that those Sages had done many good in the disguise of bad. If, I had done this penance, I would not see you. After this, Gautam Rishi asked Ganga from Lord Shiva. Shiva requested Ganga to flow down and make Sage Gautam pure. After that, Ganga flowed down. Lord Shiva told Ganga to stay there eternally for the good of all the people. All the Gods started singing the praises of Gautam Rishi, Ganga and Lord Shiva. On the request of all the Gods, Lord Shiva resided by the river Gautami by the name Trimbakeshwar (one of the Jyotirlingas.). This Jyotirlinga named Trimbak is the one, which fulfills everyone's desires. It emancipates all from their sins and miseries.

Rishi Jamadagni

Jamadagni, was one of the great sages, a descendant of the sage Bhrigu.Rishi. Son of Rishi Richeek and Satyavattee. His wife was Renuka. They had many children, the youngest of whom was Parashurama, an Avatara of Lord Vishnu. Renuka was such very devoted wife and the power of her chastity was manifest. Such was this power, that she used to fetch water from the river in a pot made of unbaked clay every day. The pot would hold together because of her devotion to her husband. One day, when she was at the river, a handsome Gandharva happened to be passing by in the sky, in his chariot. Smitten with desire for this handsome youth, for merely an instant, the damage to her powers was done. The unbaked pot that she was carrying, dissolved into the river. She was no longer chaste of mind. Afraid to go back to her husband, she waited at the river bank.

Meanwhile Jamadagni, who was waiting for fresh water to begin his morning sacrifices, noticed that his wife had not yet returned from the river. By his yogic powers, he divined all that had taken place. Exceedingly angry with his wife, he called his eldest son, told him what had happened and asked him to execute his mother. Horror-stricken, his son refused to perform this deed. He then asked all of his sons, in the order of their seniority, to execute their mother and their undutiful elder brothers. While all the elder sons refused, only his youngest son, Parashurama, ever-obedient and righteous, at once beheaded his mother and elder brothers with his axe.

Jamadagni, pleased, offered to grant a boon to Parashurama, who at once asked that his mother and brothers be restored to life and accepted into the family again. Impressed by his son's devotion and affection for his family, Jamadagni granted this boon and many others. Jamadagni was later killed by a Kshatriya king Kartavirya Arjuna, over a dispute over a divine calf.

First four rishis of Saptarshis (seven rishis) are covered in the chapter. Remaining three rishis will be covered in the next chapter.





Vedic Astrology – Role of Navagrahas

In almost every temple we visit there is a special place where the Navagrahas are placed in certain specific positions. If you have noticed, Surya (the Sun-God) is always in the center facing east and other eight Grahas are facing one of the four directions in such a way that they do not face each other.

These are the nine heavenly bodies or Navagrahas and they play an important part in Hindu religion. Vedic Astrology studies the heavenly bodies and their affects upon humans. The location of the Grahas in the sky has a significant impact upon human life.

With just this knowledge one would wonder...Now that Pluto is out of the list of nine planets how will it affect the ancient Hindu Astrology? Will it come down crashing?

The explanation is simple...the planets are not the cause of your destiny as much as the needles of a clock are not responsible for time. Suppose a new watch company decides to increase the number of needles in the clock, what effect will it have on time? Let planets come and go - there is no effect on Vedic Astrology because there are only nine grahas in your horoscope and Vedic Astrology will remain unchanged forever.

The term Graha is loosely translated into English as planets. Hindu or Vedic astrology traditionally uses the sun, moon, the five visible planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn), and two lunar nodes to comprise the nine grahas. Therefore it is important to note that grahas and planets are not the same nine!!! The position of these Grahas at the time of one's birth is said to have a large influence on the history of one's life.

According to the principles of Hindu Astrology, Grahas are only those heavenly bodies that can cast an impact on life on earth. Grahas also includes lunar nodes (Rahu and Ketu) and sub-planets (upgrahas), which are not planets but no less effective than planets. The extra-saturnine planets in the solar system (Uranus, Neptune and Pluto) are not even included in the category of Grahas. The nine Grahas in Hindu astrology and what they represent is illustrated below.

Sanskrit Name	English Name	Represents
Surya	Sun	Soul
Chandra	Moon	Mind
Mangala	Mars	Energetic action, confidence and ego
Budha	Mercury	Communication
Guru or Brihaspati	Jupiter	The great teacher
Shukra	Venus	Wealth, pleasure and reproduction
Shani	Saturn	Learning the hard way, Career and Longevity
Rahu	Ascending/ North Lunar Node	Demon who does his best to plunge any area of one's life he controls into chaos
Ketu	Descending/ South Lunar Node	Supernatural influences

In the Rig Veda there are statements such as "Oh Sun, you are the center of our worlds, you are fixed and unmoving". Sun refers to our Soul, the unchanging factor in our life.

Infact a statement in Rig Veda says "Grahaparam Kotayahah Mukya Saptah" which means "We acknowledge the existence of crores of heavenly bodies but consider only seven" linked to Karma and Astrology.

If you think it is difficult to remember the Nine Grahas, don't worry. You already know them as the seven days of the week – SUNday (Ravi or Surya), MOONday (Som /Chandra), TUESday (Mangal), WEDNESday (Budh), THURSday (Guru), FRIDay (Sukra) and SATURday (Sani). RAHU and KETU are shadows so they decided to keep them in the shadows with no corresponding weekdays. In Vedic Astrology, RAHU co-rules Saturdays, while KETU co-rules Tuesdays.

The ancient Hindu sages saw a relationship between the position and movements of the planets and the destiny of man, the sorrow and happiness experienced by him. There is a branch of astrology called "hora--skanda" that deals with horoscopes and predicting the destiny of man to some extent. Therefore it is believed that if our horoscope is cast on the basis of the configuration of the planets at the time of our birth, our fortunes over the entire period of our life can be predicted.

Different reasons are given for the ups and downs in a man's life for his joys and sorrows.

All the different causes may be valid. All of them together go to create an experience. Just like when it rains it becomes wet and the place is swarmed with winged white ants. Frogs croak. All these are indicators of the rain. Many outward signs manifest themselves as the fruits of our past actions and they are all related to one another. We come to know the consequences of our past actions in previous births in various ways. Astrological calculations just help us to find out such consequences as indicated by the heavenly bodies.

A Pictorial depiction of the Navagrahas





Skit: Shivaji and Ramdas Swami

Characters: Moderator, Shivaji, Yesaji, Tanaji, Gate-keepers, Sant Ramdas, Jijabai)

(**Moderator:** Shivaji with his commanders discussing politics. Shivaji's mother Jijabai is also with them. Suddenly they hear Ramdas Swami's voice.)

Ramdas Swami: (standing outside Shivaji's premises) Jay Jay Raghuveer Samartha!!!

(Gate-keeper comes in and informs Shivaji about the arrival of Ramdas Swami).

Gate-keeper to Shivaji: Maharaj!! Pujya Ramdas Swami wants to see you and stay couple of days with you.

Shivaji (surprisingly): Ramdas Swami is here!!! He wants to meet me.

Jijabai (happily): *Aho Bhagyam!!* Shivaba, "Go outside and bring him in respectfully"

(Shivaji goes out and brings Ramdas Swami in and extends all kinds of hospitality).

Shivaji to Ramdas: (with a great respect) Swami ji, I am at your service. It is a great honor for me. Please let me know what can I do for you.

Ramdas to Shivaji: (smilingly) Raje! I have heard your name and fame. I came here because I wanted to meet you and see your kingdom by my own eyes.

Shivaji to Ramdas: Swami ji, please stay here as long as you want.

(Shivaji then notifies his sevaks to extend Ramdas Swami all kinds of facilities. But Ramdas Swami does not accept anything. Instead he prefers to manage his meal by asking people for alms. Shivaji realizes that. He thought his hospitality is not enough. So he writes a note saying that he is giving all his kingdom to Ramdas Swami and give it to him. But Ramdas Swami declines everything)

Shivaji to Ramdas: (puzzled) Swamiji, “I beg your pardon. I have provided you all kinds of facilities. I even gave you all my kingdom. Then why do you go out for alms?”

Ramdas to Shivaji: Raje!! I am a Sadhu. I did not come here to enjoy your hospitality. Neither do I want your kingdom. And how can you give me this kingdom? It is not even yours. It is people’s kingdom. You are merely a trustee of this kingdom.

(**Moderator:** Shivaji realizes his mistake. He apologises.)

Shivaji to Ramdas: (apologitic) Swamiji, Pardon me!!. I didn’t mean to hurt you.

Ramdas to Shivaji: I know, Raje!! You are a very good king. People are happy and contented in your kingdom. I have never seen a king like you. Keep it up!!!! I am extremely happy with you. But never think that this is your kingdom. Try to be a humble sevak of your praja (people).

Shivaji to Ramdas: Ji Swamiji. I realized my mistake. You have removed my ego. I am merely a sevak of my praja (people) and I will keep that in my mind all the time.

(Everyone then praises Ramdas Swami and Shivaji).

Everyone: Jay Jay Raghuveer Samartha!!!! Ramdas Swami ki Jay!!! Jay Shivaji Jay Bhavani!!!! Shivaji Maharaj Ki Jay!!!!





-: Exercise :-

Match the Pairs

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) Ramdas Swami | 1) Saturn |
| 2) Shani | 2) family or ancestor name |
| 3) Mangala | 3) Jupiter |
| 4) Guru | 4) Shivaji's mother |
| 5) Gotra | 5) Council of 8 members |
| 6) Jijabai | 6) Jay Jay Raghuveer Samartha |
| 7) Ashta Pradhan | 7) Mars |

Identify true or false

- 1) Saptarshis means seven rishis (sages) in sanskrit.
- 2) Rishi (Sage) Gautama is first of the Saptarshis.
- 3) Surya represents soul and Chandra represents mind.
- 4) Dadoji Kondadev and Jijabai carved Shivaji's personality.
- 5) Rishi Gautama wrote Nyaya Sutras.

Objective Questions:

- 1) What are the nine grahas?

- 2) List at least three names of the Saptarshis

3) What are the two nodes according to Vedic Astrology?

4) Describe briefly the story of Shivaji Raje and Ramdas Swami.

