



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



Syllabus

Year III, 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'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

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Shloka

गुरुरादिनादिश्च गुरुः परमदैवतम् ।
गुरोः परतरं नास्ति तस्मै श्रीगुरुवे नमः ॥

gururAdinAdishca guruaH paramadaivatam |
guroH parataraM nAsti tasmai shrIguruve namaH ||

Meaning: (My) salutations to that guru who is the beginning and the beginningless, who is the highest deity and for whom there are none superior.

Subhashitam (Words of wisdom)

न चोर हर्यम न च राज हर्यम न भ्रातृ-भाज्यम न च भारकारि ।
व्यये कृते वर्धति एव नित्यम् विद्याधनम् सर्वधनम् प्रधानम् ॥

na chora haryama na cha rAja haryama
na bhrAtR^i-bhAjyama na cha bhArakAri |
vyaye kR^ite vardhati eva nityam
vidyAdhanam sarvadhanam pradhAnam ||

Meaning: It can not be stolen by thieves, nor it can be taken away by kings. It can not be divided among brothers (others), and it does not cause load on your shoulders. If spent, it always keep growing. The wealth of knowledge is the most superior of all.

Amrutvachan (Quotes)

The grace of the Guru is like an ocean. If one comes with a cup he will only get a cupful. It is no use complaining of the niggardliness of the ocean. The bigger the vessel the more one will be able to carry. It is entirely up to him.”

- Ramana Maharshi



Geet

चल चल बंधो संगस्थानम्
कांक्षसी यदी निज राष्ट्रेत्थानम्

chala chala baMdho saMghasthAnam
kAMxasI yadI nija rAShTrotthAnam

शिशु ओ बालः द्रुढः किशोरः
तरुणः प्रौढः केचित् स्थविरा
यत्र मिलंति प्रियः प्रतिदिनम्

shishu o bAlaH druDhaH kishoraH
taruNaH prauDhaH kechita sthavirA
yatra milaMti priyaH pratidinam

सायम् प्रातः संध्याकाले
निषिदिने अथवा रजनिकाले
यत्र हि नियतम् ध्वजारोहणम्

sAyam prAtaH saMdhyAkAle
niShidine athavA rajanikAle
yatra hi niyatam dhwajArohaNam

योगः व्यायामो बलदायी
सुर्यनमस्कारः शुभदायी
यत्र ही पुर्वजः पुण्यस्मरणम्

yogaH vyAyAmo baladAyI |
suryanamaskAraH shubhadAyI
yatra hI purvajaH puNyasmaraNam





The Saptarshi

In earlier chapter, we learnt that the Saptarshi means seven rishis (sages) in Sanskrit. 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. Different scriptures mention different Saptarshi. Here we will try to cover most commonly believed Saptarshis. In earlier chapters, we covered Rishi Atri, Rishi Bharadvaja, Rishi Gautama and Rishi Jamadagni. Let us try to learn about remaining 3 Rishis of Saptarshi.

KASHYAPA:

Kashyapa was one of the Saptarshis. He is the son of Marichi, one of the ten mentally generated sons (Maanasa-putras) of the Creator Brahma. He married to thirteen daughters of King Daksha. Diti and Aditi were two of them. The Agni, the Adityas, Garuda and Aruna were his sons. He is considered the father of the Gods, Demons and Nagas.

When Parashurama performed a sacrifice 21 times to eradicate all kshatriyas from the world, the chief priest who monitored and conducted the sacrifice was Kashyapa. Kashyapa received the earth from the Parashurama (one of the Lord Vishnu's incarnation). He was also the author of the Kashyap Samhita.

VASISHTHA:

Vasishtha was the Rajaguru of the Suryavamsha or Solar Dynasty. He was the manasaputra of Brahma. He had in his possession the divine cow Kamadhenu, and Nandini her child, who could grant anything to their owners. Arundhati was his wife. An immortal treatise dedicated by him to the humanity is "Vasishtha Samhitha" - a book on Vedic system of electional astrology (Muhurth)- based on which theory & principles of electional astrology have emanated & followed through millenniums & which have withstood test of the time.

The tale of Vishwamitra tells of how Vashishtha possessed a cow named Kamadhenu who could produce enough food for a whole army of troops instantly. The king Vishwamitra was very impressed with the cow and tried to take it away from Vashishtha by force, but Vashishtha's spiritual powers was too great for him. After being unable to conquer Vashishtha, Vishwamitra decided to acquire power himself through penance. He gained much yogic powers and became a Brahmarishi himself, and he renounced all his possessions and luxury and led the life of a simple forest ascetic.

King Dileepa was a king of the Raghuvamsha dynasty. He had no children. For

this reason, Dileepa visited the sage Vashishtha for his advice. Vashishta replied that they should serve the cow Nandini, child of Kamadhenu. So, according to Vashishtha, Dileepa served Nandini twenty-one day. On the twenty-first day, a lion attacks Nandini. Dileepa immediately draws his bow and tries to shoot the lion. But he finds that his arm is paralysed and cannot move. He reasons that the lion must have some sort of divine power. As if to confirm this, the lion started to speak to him. It said that Dileepa had no chance of saving the cow because the cow was the lion's chosen meal. The lion tells Dileepa to return to Vashishtha's ashram. Dileepa replies by asking if the lion would let Nandini go if he offered himself in Nandini's place. The lion agreed and Dileepa sacrificed his life for the cow. But then the lion mysteriously disappeared. Nandini explained that the lion was just an illusion to test Dileepa. Because Dileepa was truly selfless, Nandini granted him with a son.

VISHVAMITRA:

Vishvamitra is one of the most venerated rishis or sages of since ancient times. He is also credited as the author of the Gayatri Mantra. It is said that only 24 Rishis have understood the whole meaning of, and thus wielded the whole power of the Gayatri Mantra. Sage Vishvamitra is supposed to be the first, and Sage Yajnavalkya the last. Through the power attained this way, Vishvamitra was able to create a counterpart of the cosmos.

Vishvamitra was a king, also called Kaushika ("the descendant of Kusha"). He was a valiant warrior. Once he and his entire army took the shelter under Rishi Vasishtha's Ashram. Rishi Vasishtha took care of all of them. This caused a doubt in Vishvamitra's mind as to how it was possible for this simple Ashram to take care of all the arrangements to feed an entire army. He expressed his surprise to the sage. Vasishtha replied, "*O king, this feast has been provided by my calf Nandini and her mother cow Kamdhenu. They provide me with everything I need.*" Vishvamitra was filled with wonder when he heard this. He tried to take the possession of Nandini and Kamdhenu by hook or crook. But Rishi Vasishtha's yogic powers protected Nandini and Kamdhenu. Vishvamira realized that the power obtained by penances was far greater than mere physical might. He renounced his kingdom and began his quest to become a greater rishi than Vasishtha.

After many trials and austerities, Vishvamitra at last obtained the title of Brahmarishi from Vasishtha himself. During this time he had a daughter named Shakuntala (who appears in the Mahabharata). The great emperor Bharata was Shakuntala's son.

Vishvamitra continued severe tapasya for over a thousand years. He was tested again by Indra. Finally he masters his passions and controls his senses. His yogic powers reaches a terrible peak. Lord Brahma, finally names him as a Brahmairshi. Vishvamitra means a friend of all.





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

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 society - 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 Hindus 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 Hindus. 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.





Gurukul and Guru-Shishya Parampara

Ancient Bharat (India) saw the pinnacle of glory. It was wealthy and healthy in all terms. Common people were happy and contented. Sahitya, Kala, Sangeet and Sanskriti had reached at their high. The two of the most significant factors of the Ancient Bharat during the Vedic period were – Medicine and Education were provided free of charge!! Nobody was denied for the treatment of health issues and taking education. Teachers and Doctors also used to do their job selflessly as a service (seva) to the mankind. They never looked at their profession as means of earning.

Education:

In today's world, spiritual development and materialistic development of an individual are separated. It is seen in most of the countries that their education system is more or completely focused towards materialistic development which makes an individual capable of earning money, but does not teach good values. In Hindus' ancient education system during Vedic period, the focus was equally given on materialistic as well as spiritual development of individuals or learners. Therefore they could also learn the values, purpose of living, their duties and priorities that would make them a good person or citizen. Guru has a significant role in all kinds of education.

Guru

The word "Guru" has a deep meaning. But in a simple definition, Guru means a teacher. Guru is often referred as Acharya or Shikshak. Guru is considered as an imparter of knowledge. He would teach his Shishyas everything what he knew. Guru is supposed to treat everyone equally no matter whether an individual was a poor or a rich or a royal or a common person. Guru is one who molds the student's personality. That is why someone not having a Guru was once looked down upon as being an orphan. Even Vishnu-avatars like Rama and Krishna subjected themselves to the tutelage of worthy gurus like Vashishta and Sandipani. A great Guru (shikshak) Chanakya used to say that the future of the next generation is dependant on a mother and a Guru (shikshak). These two personalities have ability to make coming generation either good or bad!! That is why Guru is respected the

same way father and mother are respected. One of the scriptures, Manu Smriti regards and respects the Guru along with the mother and father. Upanishads also mention the five signs of Guru - In the presence of the Guru; Knowledge flourishes (Gyana raksha); Sorrow diminishes (Dukha kshaya); Joy wells up without any reason (Sukha aavirbhava); Abundance dawns (Samriddhi); All talents manifest (Sarva samvardhan).

Sometimes Guru is given more importance than God. There is an understanding that if the Guru and God both appeared together, then one should pay respect to the Guru first since Guru has been instrumental in leading him to God. Great saint Kabir once was asked, "If Guru and God both appear before you, whom should you prostrate?" Kabir replied, "I bow before Guru who introduced God to me!" One of our scriptures also compares Guru with the Trinity Gods - Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.

Shishya

In a simple definition, Shishya means a student or a learner. Shishya is supposed to serve Guru and his family to the best of his ability and learn from him. He learns everything from the Guru and moves on to the next level. Shishya can have many Gurus. It is quite important for Shishya to find appropriate Guru because he is the one who gives direction to his life. The Bhagavad-Geeta says that - Acquire the transcendental knowledge from a Self-realized master(guru) by humble reverence, by sincere inquiry, and by service. The wise ones who have realized the Truth will impart the Knowledge to you.

In Vedic period, the knowledge was transferred from Guru to Shishya by the word of mouth. The knowledge was best conveyed through a strong human relationship based on ideals of the shishya's respect, commitment, devotion and obedience, and on Guru's personal instruction by which the shishya eventually masters the knowledge that the Guru embodies. Excellent communication between the two also develops a strong relationship and a bond of love between them.

Gurudakshina

Gurudakshina means the shishya giving a valuable to the guru as a token of gratitude apart from his services. Such tokens can be as simple as a fruit to as serious as a thumb as given by Ekalavya to his Guru Dronacharya. Though giving gurudakshina was completely optional, shishyas would give their Guru something according to their ability. Shishyas from royal families such as princess or kings used to give wealth or land as a gurudakshina. Sometimes Guru also expects (desires) something from his Shishyas as a gurudakshina. For example, Guru Dronacharya asked his Shishyas - Kauravas and Pandavas - to bring the king of Panchala Drupada bound in chains. The best gurudakshina is to adhere to the Guru's

worlds and make a best use of the knowledge and wisdom given by Guru.

Gurukul and Guru-Shishya Parampara (tradition):

Gurukul is a type of school which is residential in nature where both Guru and his Shishyas live together. Shishyas (including royal princess or kings) would stay there as a family members of Guru and get education. They would not only take education but also serve Guru and his family in their day-to-day life including washing clothes, cooking, massaging, etc. All shishyas irrespective of their social or economical status would get the equal treatment. Depending upon the type of education, shishyas would stay there from 16 years to 36 years.

The life of Shishyas in Gurukul would be completely disciplined. They would have to adhere to the all rules of Gurukul such as getting up early in the morning, physical exercise, giving up material things, complete their studies within a given time, etc. This type of disciplined life would help Shishyas to fully concentrate on education. It would also inculcate humility in the shishyas and respect and gratitude in him for the dispenser of knowledge. Other noble virtues like discipline, dedication, sense of duty, sacrifice, social equality and compassion also evolve with the Guru's help. Gurukul system existed in Bharat until the colonial era but gradually vanished in course of time.

Relevance of Guru-Shishya Relationship in Today's world:

Today, what we see is that an education system has become a business. No "Seva" or service aspect left there. The relationship between teacher and student is questionable. There is no purity, love and respect among them. Both act like professionals. Both don't care about each other. In this situation, student may get knowledge for living, but the character building of him will not happen. He or she will not inculcate values which are more important than the knowledge. And this is definitely not a good situation.

The solution to fix this situation is to revive the relationship between teacher and student. Here Hindus can play an important role. They have had a very good past in terms of Guru-Shishya tradition. They can continue the similar tradition even today also. Although everything can not be implemented today as it was, they can realize the concept of Gurukul and Guru-Shishya relationship, mold it to suit current time and try to reimplement it. This is how they can set an example in front of everyone and contribute to the welfare of mankind!





Guru Dakshina Hundi

Material:

Disposable cup 5oz or more, any color foam sheet, permanent markers, (waterproof paint optional), Tackt glue or hot glue, scissors, cutter and anything more for decoration...

Procedure:

Trace the mouth of the cup on the foam sheet so as to draw a good circle, Cut about 1mm outside the circle. Draw a rectangle 4cm/7mm at the centre of the foam disc. Using adult help cut the rectangle out.using a cutter Now you have a slot to put your coins/bills! Decorate using markers.

Decorate the cup with permanent markers or with paints or by sticking cutouts or stickers. Put lots of Tacky glue or hot glue around the rim of the cup and stick the foam disc so as to cover the cup. Your Hundi or savings bank is ready for Guru Dakshina Utsav!!

Variation:

You can reuse any jar or container for this project like snack containers, food cans (those safely cut) etc





-: Exercise :-

Match the Pairs

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1) Vishvamitra | 1) Place where Guru teaches and Shishya learns |
| 2) Gurukul | 2) Full moon day according to Hindu calendar |
| 3) Poornima | 3) Vyasa Poornima |
| 4) Guru Poornima | 4) One of the Saptarshis |

Fill up the blanks

- 1) _____ was one of the Saptarshis.
a) Kashyapa b) Sandipani c) Valmiki d) None of these
- 2) In HSS, _____ is considered as Guru.
a) Doctorji b) Guruji c) Bhagava Dhwaja d) None of these
- 3) _____ and _____ have ability to change the world.
a) Doctor b) Mother c) Shikshak d) None of these

Questions

- 1) Who is the author of Gayatri Mantra?

- 2) In Sangh, why do we consider Bhagava Dhwaj as a Guru?

3) What was the unique factor in ancient Hindus' education system (during vedic period)?



Shloka

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।
तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ॥

yatra yogeshwaraH kR^iShNo yatra pArtho dhanurdharaH |

tatra shrIrvijayo bhUtirdhruvA nIrtimatirmama ||

Meaning: Wherever there is a Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, and wherever there is Partha (Arjuna), the archer, there will be everlasting prosperity, victory and righteousness; this is my firm conviction.

Subhashitam (Words of wisdom)

उद्यम साहस सत्य नय संस्कृति कला विलास ।
सरस्वति लक्ष्मी तहां अविचल करे निवास ॥

udyama sAhasa satya naya saMskR^iti kalA vilAsa |
saraswati lakShmI tahAM avichala kare nivAsa ||

Meaning: Where hard work, courage and truth are the life principles that nourish the culture, literature and art, it is there Goddess Saraswati and Lakshmi make their permanent abodes.

Amrutvachan (Quotes)

“Unless one always speaks the truth, one cannot find God Who is the soul of the truth. One must be very particular about telling the truth. Through truth one can realize God”— **Swami Ramakrishna**



Geet

चल चल बंधो संगस्थानम्
कांक्षसी यदी निज राष्ट्रेत्थानम्

chala chala baMdho saMghasthAnam
kAMxasI yadI nija rAShTrotthAnam

शिशु ओ बालः द्रुढः किशोरः
तरुणः प्रौढः केचित् स्थविरा
यत्र मिलंति प्रियः प्रतिदिनम्

shishu o bAlaH druDhaH kishoraH
taruNaH prauDhaH kechita sthavirA
yatra milaMti priyaH pratidinam

सायम् प्रातः संध्याकाले
निषिदिने अथवा रजनिकाले
यत्र हि नियतम् ध्वजारोहणम्

sAyam prAtaH saMdhyAkAle
niShidine athavA rajanikAle
yatra hi niyatam dhwajArohaNam

योगः व्यायामो बलदायी
सुर्यनमस्कारः शुभदायी
यत्र ही पुर्वजः पुण्यस्मरणम्

yogaH vyAyAmo baladAyI |
suryanamaskAraH shubhadAyI
yatra hI purvajaH puNyasmaraNam





Krishna Janmashtami

The festival of Krishna Janmashtami is the celebration of Lord Krishna's birthday. Krishna, the 8th incarnation of Lord Vishnu, is a unique character in Hindu history. He was naughty in his childhood days and proved to be a profound philosopher in his adulthood. The birthday of Krishna falls on the Ashtami of Krishna Paksh (the 8th day of the dark fortnight) in the month of Bhadrapada (July-August). Krishna was born at midnight, in the prison of Kamsa, during the middle of a perilous rain and storm. Thus goes the story of Krishna's birth.

Kamsa, a despot, was the king of Mathura. He had imprisoned his father in order to become the king. Devaki was Kamsa's sister and was married to a noble man Vasudeva. Kamsa one day heard a heavenly voice, saying, "*Kamsa, your days of tyranny will soon be over, you will be killed by the eighth child of Devaki.*" Scared Kamsa immediately imprisoned Devaki and Vasudeva. He did not want to take any chance and killed at birth each and every child of Devaki, until the time came for the delivery of the eighth child. To feel more secured, Kamsa increased the number of prison guards, kept strict vigilance and put Vasudeva in chains. But God planned otherwise.

At midnight when the eighth child was born, the guards fell fast asleep and Vasudeva's chain fell off his hands and feet. Wasting no time, Vasudeva picked up the baby and carrying it in a basket, he started towards Gokul. Gokul was a village of cowherds, located across the Yamuna river, where his friend Nanda lived. It was a dark stormy night with blinding rain continuously pouring from the sky. When Vasudeva reached the bank of river Yamuna, the river was in spate. The wind and storm were blowing wild, and Vasudeva was in a fix.

"*Lord, what should I do?*" murmured Vasudeva. Suddenly a miracle happened, the river parted and Vasudeva walked over the river bed. Throughout the way, Vasudeva and the baby were protected from rain by the hood of the great eternal snake, Vasuki. Finally Vasudeva reached Nanda's house. Upon reaching Nanda's house, Vasudeva found the mother, Yashoda, and her newborn baby girl in deep sleep. He had no time to think. He quickly exchanged the babies and returned to the prison with the infant girl, while the guards were still asleep.

As soon as Vasudeva entered the prison cell, the door got locked behind him and he was chained again as if nothing happened in between. The guards woke up and heard the cry of the baby. Kamsa was immediately informed and he came running to kill the child. But to his utter surprise he found it to be a girl and not a boy. Devaki begged for the newborn baby's life from her brother.

"What can a girl do to you Kamsa? Spare her life, please!" appealed Devaki. But the Kamsa did not pay attention to the appeal. As he was ready to kill the baby, the child slipped out of his hand and flew towards the sky. At that moment, a heavenly voice was heard, *"Kamsa, the one who shall destroy you still lives. He is growing in Gokul."*

Next morning Nanda and his wife Yashoda discovered the boy left by Vasudeva. They were little puzzled but did not fuss about it because they might loose the baby. The baby was of dark complexion, so he was named Krishna.

Kamsa was frightened by the heavenly voice. He immediately sent Puthana, his wicked maid, and asked her to kill all the babies born on the same day when Devaki gave birth to the baby. Puthana smeared poison on her breast and went around in the town of Gokul to breast-feed the babies born on that day. She reached Nanda's house and lovingly asked Krishna's mother, Yashoda, to give the baby to her to love and fondle. Yashoda gave the baby and, without any suspicion, went on with her daily chore.

Suddenly there was a loud shriek. Everyone came running to the courtyard and found to their surprise the dead body of Puthana lying on the floor while Krishna was smiling and kicking. People now knew that Krishna was not an ordinary boy. Yashoda happily picked up Krishna and felt safe. Baby Krishna grew in Yashoda's house until he reached his teens. He later challenged Kamsa and killed him. Then he released his grandfather Ugrasena and reinstated him to his throne. He respected and loved both his own parents, Vasudeva and Devaki, and his adopted parents, Nanda and Yashoda.

Janmashtami is celebrated with great pomp and show in Hindu temples and homes in Bharat and other countries. The festival is celebrated for two days; on the day when Krishna took birth in the prison of Kamsa at Mathura and also on the following day to commemorate Krishna's presence in the house of Nanda and Yashoda at Gokul. Ardent devotees pray at the middle of the night celebrating Krishna's birth on the first day. Children join the celebration on the next day with worship (puja) and sweets (prasaad).

Decorations depicting Krishna's birth and his transfer to Gokul, are displayed every where. This is called jhanki, a peek in the past. In Bengal, it is called, Gupta Vrindavan, meaning hidden Vrindavan, where Krishna spent time with his consort Radha. It is a great fun planning and executing the decoration that depicts Krishna's life in Gokul. The display is left for few days for friends and relatives to enjoy. The grandparents (or other elders) narrate to the children the interesting stories of Krishna, his pranks of childhood, Radha's divine love for Krishna in his young days, and finally, his days of kingship offering us the eternal truth of the great Bhagavad Gita. There is nothing in the world that can be compared with the profound philosophy of Gita written in that hoary past.





Story of Devavrata

Devavrata that is Bheeshma was one of the most legendary character of the Mahabharata. He was a man of wisdom and great renunciation (sacrificing everything). Just like Shri Rama, he made great sacrifice for his father's sake. He gave up marriage and throne for the happiness of his father. Let us learn the story of him.

Birth of Devavrata:

King Shantanu was ruling over Hastinapur, his kingdom efficiently. One evening, he was strolling on the banks of the Ganga river when he saw a heavenly beauty staring at him intently. Shantanu asked her: *"O beautiful lady, who are you? Are you the same divine beauty who my father had told me of? If you are the same, kindly marry me."* The divine lady who was Ganga said: *"I am indeed the same lady. I will fulfill your desire on one condition that whatever I do you will not stop me. If you ever break your promise, I will at once leave you."* Shantanu agreed to it. Thereafter they married and returned to the kingdom. In course of time, Ganga gave birth to 7 kids but killed them immediately by throwing them in the water.

When their 8th son was born, Ganga took him up and was just about to throw him in the river. King Shantanu could not control himself why she was killing all her children. Ganga then revealed her identity: *"I am Ganga. The 7 sons whom I had killed were in fact the 7 Vasus. I killed them because they had requested me to free them from a curse. This is the 8th Vasu. You will not be able to raise him properly. So I am taking him with me. At the appropriate time I will hand him over to you."* Saying this Ganga disappeared.

One-day king Shantanu was strolling at the bank of the Ganga. There he saw a boy who blocked the flow of the river with one arrow only. With the next arrow the river began to flow again. Shantanu was amazed. When Ganga came there, she introduced the boy to him and handing him to the king, she disappeared again. That boy was the 8th Vasu who became Devavrata, the son of Shantanu and later came to be known as Bheeshma. Appointing Devavrata as prince that is heir to the throne, king Shantanu became free of worries.

The vow of Devavrata

One day Shantanu was strolling on the banks of the Yamuna river. Suddenly he felt a strong, divine scent. He saw an extremely pretty girl who was the source of

that divine scent. Her name was Satyavati; the daughter of Nishadaraja, the boatman. King Shantanu fell in love with her. He went to her father Nishadaraja and requested him to give his daughter in marriage. But the witty boatman put forth a condition to accept the king's proposal that only the son born to his daughter would be king in the future. King Shantanu didn't accept it and returned to his kingdom. He could not forget Satyavati though. He missed her so much that he fell ill. Devavrata came to know about it and he felt very bad. He decided to convince Satyavati and his father Nishadaraja and do whatever it takes to make the agree.

Alongwith his ministers, Devavrata at once visited Nishadaraja and begged him to give his daughter Satyavati to his father in marriage. Nishadaraja uttered the same condition: *"O prince, I will agree on one condition. My condition is that only the son born to Satyavati shall become the king in future."* Devavrata knew that accepting Nishadaraja's condition means giving up his birth rights to the throne. He was little surprised but determined to do the sacrifice. In front of everybody he swore, *"I am Devavrat. I take a vow that I will not claim my rights on the throne of the Hastinapur. I will not become a king. Instead I will protect this kingdom and give my services to whoever sits on the throne."* Everyone mesmerized but Nishadaraja still was not convinced. He again asked his doubt: *"O prince, I can believe your words. But there is no guarantee that your sons and Satyavati's sons will not fight for the throne."* Hearing Nishadaraja's words, Devavrata took another vow: *"Hey Nishadaraja! To avoid that situation I swear that I will not marry and remain a true celibate as long as I live and spend my life reciting God's name."* Now Nishadaraja got convinced and agreed to give his daughter to king Shantanu.

King Shantanu and all ministers witnessed these two awful vows of Devavrata. Gods from the heaven showered flowers on him hearing his terrible oaths. This gave him immediate recognition among the Gods. It was extremely difficult to keep up such promises. But Devavrata kept up these two promises until the end of his life. Because of his *bheeshan pratigya* (terrible oaths), he was known as Bheeshma. Everyone started calling him Bheeshma.

Taking two vows, Bheeshma sacrificed almost everything for the happiness of his father, king Shantanu. King Shantanu felt obligated. He granted Bheeshma the boon of *Ichcha Mrityu* (control over his own death – he could choose the date and time of his death). Later Bheeshma became a great archer and a warrior of peerless valour and courage. He considered that - protecting the king and his kingdom - is his Dharma. He served the king and kingdom until the end of his life.





Pitamaha Bheeshma

In earlier topics, we learnt how prince Devavrat took oaths to keep his father King Shantanu happy. Since he wedded to oaths, he was known by Bheeshma. He spent his entire life in protecting king and kingdom of Hastinapur without expecting any aristocracy. Let us try to learn more about the latter part of Bheeshma.

In course of time Satyavati begot two sons – Chitrangad and Vichitravirya from the King Shantanu. They grew into strong and beautiful princes. After Shantanu's death, Satyavati was completely relying on Bheeshma in every matter including personal/family issues and politics. Bheeshma crowned Chitrangad as a king. Chitrangad was very ambitious but egoistic. He was killed in a battle with Gandharva. Bheeshma then crowned Vichitravirya as a king and became his guardian to help him rule the kingdom as he was a minor.

Story of Amba

Once there was a swayamvara organized by the king of Kashi kingdom for his three daughters – Amba, Ambika and Ambalika who were unmatched in beauty. Satyavati advised Bheeshma to go swayamvara and win those ladies for her son Vichitravirya. Bheeshma then went to swayamvara, challenged all warriors and kings who had come for swayamvara, defeated them and took those ladies with him.

Upon arriving back to the kingdom, Bheeshma came to know that Amba had already chosen the king of Shalva as her husband. So he let her go. Amba went to king of Shalva. But now he denied her as she was taken by Bheeshma. So Amba again went back to Bheeshma and asked to marry her. But Bheeshma, under of the oath of bachelorhood, too didn't accept her. So humiliated from both, Amba tried to seek help but Bheeshma was so powerful that nobody could help her out. Angry but helpless Amba entered into the fire and killed herself by swearing that she would be the reason for Bheeshma's death in her next life. Bheeshma himself was extremely sad as he was the reason for all these awful incidents though he was not wrong. Later Amba reborn as Shikhandi who was instrumental in killing Bheeshma.

Dhritarashtra, Pandu and Vidur

Ambika and Ambalika happily married with Vichitravirya. Because of untimely death of Vichitravirya, they didn't have any child. Seeing the end of lineage, Satyavati again insisted Bheeshma to break his vow and get married, but failed to move him. Finally Satyavati

requested sage Ved-vyasa to help her out. Then with the blessings of Ved-vyasa, Ambika, Ambalika and her maid begot three sons – Dhritarashtra, Pandu and Vidur. Dhritarashtra. As boys grew young, they married to Gandhari, Kunti and Sulabha respectively. Dhritarashtra had 100 sons named Kauravas and Pandu had 5 sons named Pandavas.

Kauravas and Pandavas

Kauravas and Pandavas used to call Bheeshma as Pitamaha as he was a grand-father of them. Both Kauravas and Pandavas grew strong and brave. Particularly Pandavas were not only strong and brave but also humble. Everyone in the kingdom including Bheeshma liked and loved them by heart because of their good qualities and character. Because of Pandavas popularity, Kauravas used to get jealous. They tricked them now and then and sometimes tried to kill them. But their attempts died in vain. Bheeshma was extremely unhappy seeing this bitterness and enmity among the family members. Bheeshma in vain tried to convince Kauravas time to time. Many unfortunate incidents happened between Kauravas and Pandavas for which Bheeshma was a witness.

Mahabharata War

Enmity between Kauravas and Pandavas led to Mahabharata war. Bheeshma tried to avert it but could not. And when the war was inevitable, he unwillingly chose to fight on behalf of Kauravas because he had taken an oath to protect the king and kingdom. War lasted long for 18 days. He was a Senapati (chief commander) of Kauravas army. He was of course invincible. Nobody could defeat him. Although Bheeshma was on the Kauravas side, he by heart wanted Pandavas to win. So he himself showed them the way of defeating him. Bheeshma told them that Shikhandi was Amba in his previous birth. Since Amba was a woman, he would not use weapons on her. So in the war, Arjuna shot arrows on him standing behind Shikhandi and pierced him with arrows. Bheeshma fell but didn't die because of his boon of ichcha mrityu. He was waiting for an auspicious time to leave this world.

Last Days of Bheeshma:

During the war, the sun was in the Southern Hemisphere, so he did not wish to die then. He therefore had to spend the winter lying wounded on the battlefield. While Bheeshma Pitamaha was lying on the battlefield, Yudhishtir received the knowledge of Dharma, Karma and Politics from him. Thus preaching his near and dear ones, Bheeshma who had been a true celibate since childhood, left his ephemeral body on the 8th day of Magha Shukla Paksha. Thus his soul annihilated with that supreme soul which we call Parmatma. Keeping up promises was his Dharma and he followed his Dharma in all circumstances until the end of his life.





Wall Hanging (Krishna Picture)

Material: 6"/4" Shri Krishna picture printed on photo paper, sequins, 1 skewer stick, one A4 size sheet of dark blue felt, 1.5' yarn or any string, glue, scissors.(optional-hot glue)

Procedure:

1. Fold 1" of the width side of felt and glue so as to leave openings for the skewer stick to pass through.
2. Make cuts on the other end about 1" long and 1/4" apart to look like a fringe.
3. Cut the pointed end of the skewer stick and pass it thru the fold of the felt.
4. Now tie the two ends of yarn to the two ends of the skewer. Tie double knots. This way it secures the skewer from coming out and also useful to hang our project on wall or in pooja ghar.
5. Glue the Shri Krishna picture on the centre of the felt.
6. Decorate around the picture with sequins.



Variation: If having the picture on photo paper is not possible then use regular paper and stick the picture on foam sheet about the same size and then stick on the felt. Just thin picture will not look good for this project. If smaller picture is used then use smaller size of felt.

Use your creativity in decorating the project. Older kids can try sticking sequins on the the pic itself as the jewellery of Shri Krishna.





-: Exercise :-

Match the Pairs

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1) Devavrata | 1) Satyawati |
| 2) Shantanu | 2) five sons of Pandu |
| 3) Kauravas | 3) Place where Krishna spent his childhood |
| 4) Pandavas | 4) Bheeshma |
| 5) Gokul | 5) Hundred sons of Dhritarashtra |

Identify true or false

- 1) King Shantanu was Devavrata's father.
- 2) Kauravas and Pandavas used to call Bheeshma as Pitamaha.
- 3) Bheeshma fought Mahabharata war against Kauravas.
- 4) Nanda and Yashoda were Krishna's father and mother.

Objective Questions:

- 1) Describe the two vows taken by Devavrata (Bheeshma).

- 2) Name and justify any two virtues of Bheeshma.

Shloka

नमस्समस्तभुतानां आदिभूताय भूमृते ।
अनेकरुपरुपाय विष्णवे प्रभविष्णवे ॥

namassamastabhutAnAM aadibhUtAya bhUbhR^ite |

anekaruparupAya viShNave prabhaviShNave ||

Meaning: Salutations to Lord Vishnu, who is the creator of all beings, the sustainer of the creation, whose forms is all forms, who is all pervasive, and who is self-effulgent.

Subhashitam (Words of wisdom)

यथा चित्तं तथा वाचो यथा वाचस्तथा क्रियाः ।
चित्ते वाचि क्रियायां च साधुनामेकरुपता ॥

yathA chittaM tathA vAcho yathA vAchastathA kriyAH |

chitte vAchi kriyAyAM cha sAdhunAmekarupatA ||

Meaning: As one thinks, so should one speak; and as one speaks, so should one act. For good people there is uniformity between thought, speech and action.

Amrutvachan (Quotes)

Spontaneous love and compassionate service for the poor in society is held up as the highest form of worship of God. The spirit of selfless social service which makes for the uplift of the needy and deprived sections is thus transformed into a spiritual saadhanaa.

- Ma. Kai. H. V. Seshadri



Geet

चल चल बंधो संगस्थानम्
कांक्षसी यदी निज राष्ट्रोत्थानम्

chala chala baMdho saMghasthAnam
kAMxasI yadI nija rAShTrotthAnam

शिशु ओ बालः द्रुढः किशोरः
तरुणः प्रौढः केचित् स्थविरा
यत्र मिलन्ति प्रियः प्रतिदिनम्

shishu o bAlaH druDhaH kishoraH
taruNaH prauDhaH kechita sthavirA
yatra milaMti priyaH pratidinam

सायम् प्रातः संध्याकाले
निषिदिने अथवा रजनिकाले
यत्र हि नियतम् ध्वजारोहणम्

sAyam prAtaH saMdhyAkAle
niShidine athavA rajanikAle
yatra hi niyatam dhvajArohaNam

योगः व्यायामो बलदायी
सुर्यनमस्कारः शुभदायी
यत्र ही पुर्वजः पुण्यस्मरणम्

yogaH vyAyAmo baladAyI |
suryanamaskAraH shubhadAyI
yatra hI purvajaH puNyasmaraNam





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 pashyant, maa kashchit dukkhabhaag 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.





Story of Adi Shankaracharya

Birth and childhood

Adi Shankaracharya was born in a village called Kalady in Kerala. His parents (Sivaguru and Aryamba) were childless for many years. They prayed at the Vadakkunnathan temple (also known as Vrishachala) in Thrissur, Kerala, for a child. Legend is that Lord Shiva appeared in their dreams and offered them a choice: they can have an ordinary son who would live a long life, or an extraordinary son who would not live long. Both the parents chose the latter; thus a son was born to them. He was named Shankara in honour of Lord Shiva.

The father of Shankara was a regular worshiper of Devi Rajarajeshwari for many years. He used to offer milk everyday to the Goddess. Everyday after finishing puja and offering milk to the Goddess, he used to distribute remaining milk to his wife, son and others as *prasadam*. One day when Sankara was barely 5 years old, his father had to visit a neighbouring village. He told the boy, *"Son! Your mother cannot perform the worship which I do. You better do the worship today."* After his father left, Shankara filled a tumbler with milk, placed it before the image of the Goddess Rajarajeshwari and prayed: *"Mother! Accept this offering of milk."* He kept on praying to the Goddess. When he found that the milk remained untouched, he became very sad. He cried: *"Mother! What crime I have committed? When my father offered the milk you took it. But when I am offering, you are not taking."* He was in a deep distress. He was thinking whether there was any lapse on his part, he became desperate. He declared in agony: *"Mother! If You do not take the milk I shall end my life. I would have dishonoured my father. If I cannot please my parents, what is the use in my living?"* He prayed intensely to the Goddess in great agony. Moved by the naive prayers of the boy, Rajarajeshwari appeared before Him. She told him: *"Child, Be happy. I am immensely pleased with your devotion. I shall drink the milk."* So saying, she drank all the milk in the tumbler. The boy was aghast to see that the whole tumbler empty. He again cried: *"O! Mother! If You drink all the milk, what is left for distributing as prasadam? My mother will think that I have drunk all the milk, I have to give the prasadam to her. My father used to give some milk as prasadam also. Therefore, please restore some of the milk in the tumbler."* "How can the milk once consumed be brought back?" the Goddess told the boy that it is impossible to bring back the milk that has been consumed. The boy was in deep distress again. He thought within himself: *"I will get a bad name from my mother."* He prayed, *"Mother please give at least a little quantity of milk."* Responding to the prayers of the young boy the Goddess drew milk from her breast and gave it to the boy. It was the sacred power of the milk which enabled Shankara in later years to master all the scriptures and earn lasting fame as a great spiritual leader revered by all.

Shankara's father died while Shankara was very young. Shankara's upanayana, the initiation into student-life, was performed at the age of five. As a child, Shankara showed remarkable scholarship, mastering the four Vedas by the age of eight. Following the customs of those days, Shankara studied and lived at the home of his teacher. It was customary for students and men of learning to receive bhiksha (alms) from the laity. On one occasion while accepting bhiksha, Shankara came upon a woman who had only a single dried amalaka fruit to eat. Rather than consuming this last bit of food herself, the lady gave away the fruit to Shankara as bhiksha. Moved by her piety, Shankara composed the Kanakadhārā Stotram on the spot. Legend has it that on completion of this stotra, golden amalaka fruits were showered upon the woman by Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth.

Sannyasa

From a young age, Shankara was attracted to sannyasa (monastic life). His mother was against it and refused him formal permission. However, once when Shankara was bathing in the Purna River near his house, a crocodile gripped his leg and began to drag him into the water. Only his mother was nearby and it proved impossible for her to rescue him. Shankara asked his mother to give him permission to renounce the world then and there, so that he could be a sannyāsīn at the moment of death. This mode of entering the renunciatory stage is called Āpat Sannyāsa. At the end of her wits, his mother agreed. Shankara immediately recited the mantras to make a renunciate of himself. Miraculously, the crocodile released him and swam away. Shankara emerged unscathed from the water.

With the permission of his mother, Shankara left Kerala and travelled towards North India in search of a Guru. On the banks of the Narmada River, he met Govinda Bhagavatpada, the disciple of Gaudapada. When Govinda Bhagavatpada asked Shankara's identity, he replied with an extempore verse that brought out the Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Govinda Bhagavatpada was impressed and took Shankara as his disciple. Adi Shankara was commissioned by his Guru to write a commentary on the Brahma Sutras and propagate Advaita Vedanta. The Mādhavīya Shankaravijaya states that Adi Shankara calmed a flood from the Reva River by placing his kamandula (water pot) in the path of the raging water, thus saving his Guru, Govinda Bhagavatpada, who was absorbed in Samādhi ("meditation") in a cave nearby.

Shankara lived a very short life of 32 years. But in these years he did great things. Shankara travelled throughout India to spread his Advaita Vedanta philosophy. He established four Mathas on the four sides of India. He was then known as Adi Shankaracharya. At the age of 32, he disappeared in the Himalayas. It is believed that Shankara attained heavenly abode in Kedarnath (in Himalayas).





Adi Shankaracharya - Teachings and Philosophy

In earlier chapter, we learnt a story of Shankara's birth. In his 32 years of life, he explained knowledge of Vedas in a simple form. His philosophy is called Advaita Vendanta. He travelled throughout India to spread his philosophy. He challenged all scholars and won with them in debate. Let us try to learn his teachings and philosophy in form of stories.

Teachings

Totaka, a disciple of Shankara was approached by a young man and was asked that why he was wearing the yellow robe and wasting his time by remaining with the Guru. Totaka said that only his Guru could answer such question and took him to Shankara. Shankara asked whether his doubt was regarding his God or Totaka's God. The young questioner asked why Shankara was distinguishing between his God and Totaka's God while God is only one and is not different for different people. By asking such a question he displayed his foolishness in accepting the existence of only one God and yet was questioning His reality.

Once Shankara asked the question: *"Who is a real conqueror in this world?"* His disciples gave different answers. One disciple said that a real conqueror was one who had subdued the world and brought it under his sway. Another said the man who scaled the Himalayas and planted a flag on its summit was a great conqueror. Another declared that one who crossed the oceans was a hero. Shankaracharya listened to these replies with a smile and said, *"Dear students! You are looking at conquests solely in worldly terms. This way anyone can achieve victory. An animal can fight another and establish its victory. Likewise, there can be a victory among birds. Birds cross oceans and fly over the Himalayas. Where is the victory in all this? Nothing at all. He alone is great who has mastery over his mind. All other achievements are of no avail. Every action is sanctified by making it an offering to God."* Shankaracharya declared the one who is immersed in the contemplation of the



Supreme Self, experiences the highest bliss, regardless of another actions. Sankara exhorted the devotee to adore God, in whatever situation he was placed, whether in a crowd, or while enjoying something or in any other state. This experience of Divine is ones true wealth.

His message to the youth was a warning to be very careful in the life they led. They should give up attachment to the body. Shankara sought in this manner to turn away the youth from the sensual pleasures to thoughts of God. Shankara did not call upon young men to take to Sanyasa. He exhorted them to do their duty and dedicate their body to the service of the Divine. He preached the Truth, practiced it and broadcast it to the world.

On his mission to spread the Advaita Vedanta philosophy, Adi Shankara began a Dig-vijaya (missionary tour). He travelled throughout India, from the South to Kashmir and Nepal, preaching to the local people and debating philosophy with scholars and monks along the way. He travelled to Kashi, where a young man named Sanandana became his first disciple. On reaching Badri in the Himalayas, he wrote the famous Bhasyas (commentaries) and Prakarana granthas (philosophical treatises) on the vedas and upanishads.

Adi Shankara founded four Mathas (monestries) to guide the Hindus. These are at Sringeri in Karnataka in the south, Dwaraka in Gujarat in the west, Puri in Orissa in the east, and Jyotirmath (Joshimath) in Uttarakhand in the north. He put in charge of these mathas his four main disciples: Sureshwaracharya, Hastamalakacharya, Padmapadacharya, and Totakacharya respectively.

Philosophy

Adi Shankara proclaimed the supremacy of the path of knowledge for the realisation of the Self. In his Anandalahari he declared that Ananda (Bliss) is man's goal and it can be secured only by Gods grace. He firmly asserted that Brahman alone is real and there is no second (Advaita). Atma Gnana (knowledge of the self) is essential. This was the main teaching of Adi Shankara throughout his life, as he was preaching and following the Vedic dictum: "*Ekatma Sarvabhoota Antaratma.*" (the one Atma is present in all beings) "*Ekam sath vipra Bahuda Vadanthi*" (the one truth is described in many ways by the wise). He was also preaching that Gnana or wisdom was nothing but "*Advaita Darshana*" (Vision of Non-duality) But during his last days, Shankara realised that Bhakti was greater than Gnana. In his famous "*Bhaja Govindam*", Adi Shankara emphasizes that only the path of devotion will help you to get over the cycle of birth and death.



Ganesha Image

Material: Play dough, Black beads, Craft knife, Toothpicks, paper plate, Plastic to cover the work area.

Procedure

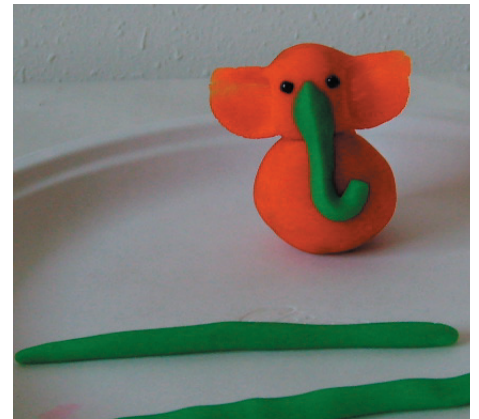
Take the Play dough. Soften and smoothen it by kneading and rolling it in your hands.

Make two balls by the play dough (same color). One ball of 2" diameter and another ball of about 1" diameter. Now join the balls together by pressing and blending the play dough, the bigger ball (2") makes the belly of Ganesha and the smaller ball (1") the head.



Trunk, Eyes and Ears

Make a ball of 3/8" diameter and coil it with your palms, then attach it as trunk of Ganesha. Take two black beads and press them into play dough to make eyes of Ganesha. Make ears of Ganesha, by pull the play dough at the side of the head with your thumb and forefinger. With the help of toothpick make three small lines in the ears.

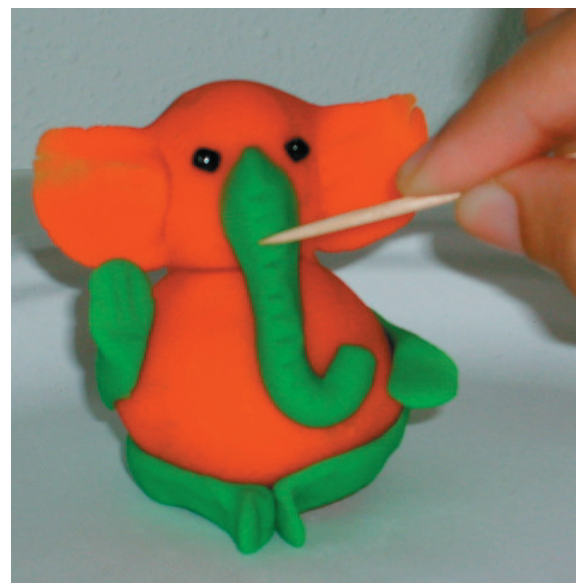


Hands and Legs

Make two balls of 1/2" diameter.

Take the balls and by rolling them into your palms make coils of both balls. Attach by pressing the coils to the body as hands and legs.

Press the ends of the coil with your thumb and finger to flatten them a little. Make fingers in hands and legs by making lines with the help of toothpick.



Jewellery

Make a ball of 3/8 " diameter. Flatten the ball a little and with the help of your fingers and thumb make a crown for Ganesha.

Beads and toothpick can also be used to decorate the crown. Attach the crown to the head of Ganesha.

Make another ball of 3/8" diameter and roll the play dough into a coil. Blend and smooth ends together and garland it Ganesha. You can decorate it with toothpick to make it more beautiful.

Mouse (the vahana of Ganesha)

Make another ball of 3/8" diameter. Pinch the ball with your thumb and finger from one side. Press the clay from sides to make his ears. Attach a small coil for his tail. Take a toothpick and make two holes for his eyes and one for his mouth.

Plate of Laddoos

Now as our Ganesha would need something to eat we can make a plate with lots of laddoos. Make a ball of 3/8" diameter. Pressing it in the middle with the help of your finger and thumb, so that it is a little thin in the center with its edges thicker. Make tiny balls from the play dough to make as laddoo's for our Ganesha and place them on the plate. Place one laddoo in left hand of Ganesha also. Place your Ganesha on a paper plate and let it dry for a day.

So!! Here is your beautiful Ganesha ready to go into your pooja room.

Tips: You can use two or more colors of play dough to make the image. Also you can use some paints to decorate the Ganeshji instead of beads.

All the best!! Be creative!!



-: Exercise :-

Match the Pairs

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) Raksha Bandhan | 1) Shankaracharya's birth place |
| 2) Kalady | 2) Monastic life |
| 5) Sanyasa | 5) Rakhi Poornima |

Identify true or false

- 1) Shankaracharya established four Mathas to spread his philosophy.
- 2) Bhaja Govindam is composed by Adi Shankaracharya.

Questions:

- 1) What is the name of Shankaracharya's philosophy?

- 2) What are the locations of four Mathas established by Adi Shankaracharya?

- 3) How Raksha Bandhan is celebrated in Sangh?
