



Syllabus

Year III, Quarter IV

Age Group : 5 to 8

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

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

Balagokulam is a program of Hindu Swyamsevak Sangh (HSS)

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Shloka

गजाननम् भूतगणादिसेवितं कपित्थ जम्बुफल चारु भक्षितम्
ऊमासुतम् शोक विनाश कारनम् नमामि विघ्नेश्वर पाद पन्कजम् ।

gajānanam bhūtagaṇādisevitam kapittha jambuphala cāru bhakṣitam
ūmāsutam śoka vināśa kāranam namāmi vighneśvara pāda pankajam ।

Meaning: I worship the lotus feet of Ganesha, the son of Uma, the destroyer of all sorrows, who is served by the host of gods and elementals, and who takes the essence of the kapittha-jambhu fruit (fruit resembling the bilwa fruit).

Subhashitam (Words of wisdom)

भाषासु मुख्या मधुरा दिव्या गिर्वाणभारती ।
तस्माद्धि काव्यं तस्मादपी सुभाषितम् ॥

bhAShAsu mukhyA madhurA divyA girvANabhAratI |
tasmAddhi kAvyAM tasmAdapI subhAShitam ||

Meaning: Among the languages, the speech of the gods is the foremost, sweet and divine. Sweeter than poetry. Sweeter than the good saying.

Amrutvachan (Quotes)

It is very wrong notion that science and religion are opposed to each other. May be that some religious dogmas are in conflict with scientific theories, but the spirit of religion that there is a mystery in the world which can not be comprehended by scientific calculations is accepted by some of the greatest scientists. Einstein, for example, affirms that science is inadequate to grasp the spiritual verges. A little science takes us away from religion but a little more science brings us back to it.

- Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

har har bam bam hindu bankure hai ham

har har bam bam hindu bankure hai ham
 chir vijay ki chaah se badh rahein hai yeh kadam
 vishwa ko uthayenge Hindu dheer-veer hum
 har har bam bam hindu bankure hai ham ||
 mahan hindu dharma ki parampara mahan hai
 yugon yugon se dharma ki divya aan baan
 haiyuddha ho ki shanti ho karma, dharma, kranti ho
 vishwa jaanta hai yah ham nahin kisi se kam ||
 kal chakra vakra hai, purnima aman ho
 disha disha prahar hai, ham sabhi satark ho
 ab na deena heena ham, rahena jai koyi bhram
 kal ke pravaah ko mod kar hi lenge ham ||
 Vamshi ki taan hai, geet-geet gyan hai,
 Kadam-kadam saja hua sej hai tufan hai,
 Aankh-aankh jwal hai, bhuja-bhuja krupan hai,
 desh-vishwa ki suno, hai jayeen jawan hum ||

Meaning:

Hey! Hey! We are brave Hindus.
 We are wanting lasting victory and moving toward this.
 Let us awaken the world, we brave Hindus.
 The great Hindu Dharma has great traditions.
 For ages it has brought divine prestige and customs to the country.
 Whether in war or peace, in good works, Dharma, or revolution,
 the people of the world know that we are not less than anyone.
 The times are troubled. The full moon's brightness must not give way to new moon's darkness.
 Blows are coming from every direction, but we are all alert.
 Now we are not poor and deprived, so let there be no illusion.
 We can even stop the flow of time.
 Hear the call of the ancestors. Learn the knowledge of the songs.
 We are all ready to step forward, whether the future is bright or stormy.
 All eyes are on fire. All arms are brandishing swords.
 Listen, country and world! We are the victorious soldiers.



Mahatma Gandhi

Bharat (India) has been a motherland for some but spiritual land for all Hindus in the world. Therefore the great sons of Her - spiritual leaders, scholars, freedom fighters, saints, scientists - are always respected by all. A great son of Bharat, Mahatma Gandhi, was one of them; respected by all. He was born on October 2nd, 1869. His real full name was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. As he was one of the greatest soul of India, he was known by Mahatma. Literally Mahatma means great soul.

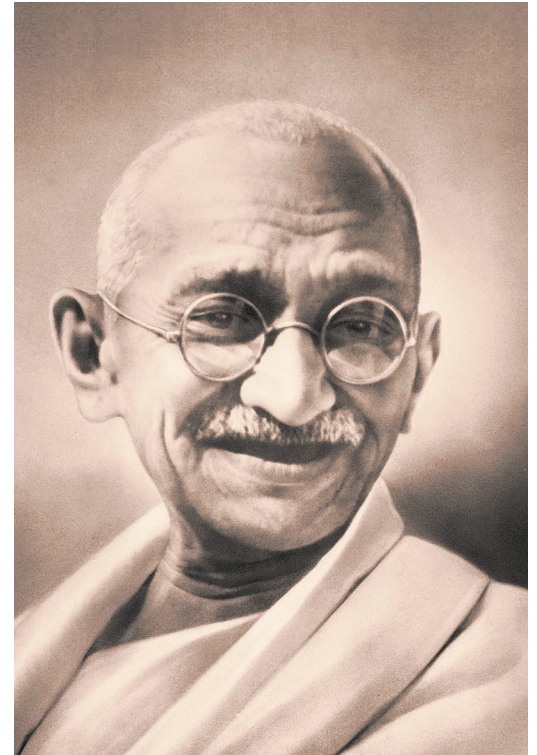
Young Mohandas was shy but excelled in studies. His parents wanted him to study abroad (England) and become a barrister. So he went to England for further study. For him, it was a completely different environment; food habits, manners, external appearance were completely different. At that time, Mohandas was just 18. But Mohandas adjusted himself in no time. He started wearing English clothes and adopted their food habits.

After becoming a barrister, Mohandas came back to Bharat. In his profession, he was supposed to do anything to win the case even telling a lie. But Mohandas was very truthful. Even in the profession, he couldn't tell a lie. Apparently, he couldn't get a job in India. With great efforts, he got a job in a legal firm but for that he was expected to go to South Africa. Without having much a choice, Mohandas and his wife Kasturba set to go to South Africa.

Mohandas stayed in South Africa almost for 20 years. In these years, Mohandas had worked shoulder to shoulder with the British on occasions and even received awards for this. He also fought for civil liberties and political rights to Indian immigrants to South Africa. Over these years, he started feeling that Indians were being treated bad and considered inferior by the "white british" people. He himself faced bitter experiences. He tried to improve the social status of Indian immigrants by peaceful protest against British Government. While in South Africa, he set a direction and goal of his life and came back to India to accomplish his goal.

Those were the days when Indian were fighting against the British rule in India. After returning from South Africa, Mohandas Gandhi dedicated himself to the service of mother-land and humanity. He entered into Indian politics. Another great leader

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was his mentor and guide. Gandhi fought against British but his way was completely different. Civil disobedience, non-cooperation, satyagraha, passive resistance without any violence, "fasting unto death" were his weapons. Soon, Gandhi gained millions of followers and became a center of freedom struggle and Indian politics. His political hold on India was so powerful that British authorities couldn't dare to interfere with him.



Alongwith political freedom, Mohandas Gandhi also cared for the economic independence. He realized that exploitation of Indians by British industrialists had resulted in extreme poverty in the country and the destruction of home industry. As a solution, he encouraged his fellow Indians to boycott foreign goods and adopt "swadeshi". He advocated the revival of cottage industries. He himself began to use a "charakha" (spinning wheel) as a token of renewal of local industry and set an example for others.

Mohandas Gandhi was also a very spiritual man. He lived a spiritual and ascetic life of prayers, fasting and meditation. He studied geeta as well as scriptures of other religions. Many tried to convert him. But he remained a staunch Hindu his entire life. After he entered into politics, he adopted a simple lifestyle of a common Indian man. He wore the loincloth and shawl and subsisted on vegetables, fruit juices and milk. Advocacy of non-violence was prominent in all his thoughts and deeds. He also put lot of efforts in social reforms. He fought against untouchability. To give them a high esteem, he considered them as "harijans" (children of god).

At last, because of intense efforts by Indian freedom fighters, Indian gained freedom from British rule. Just after the freedom, Mohandas Gandhi was assassinated by fanatic man on January 31st 1948. Mohandas Gandhi was full of virtues. He held high moral and values in politics, personal life and social life. He was extremely honest, upright, disciplined and truthful. Because of his numerous virtues, people called him as - Mahatma.





Inspirational Stories of Mahatma Gandhi

Mohandas alias Mahatma Gandhi was one of the tallest and greatest freedom fighters of India. He was full of virtues. He was a political leader as well as spiritual man like a saint. He held high moral and values in all his life. He walked first what he talked and then encouraged others to follow him. His entire life is an inspiration for all. Let us try to learn about some inspirational events of his life.

No cheating:

One day, the Inspector of Schools, Mr Giles came to Mohan's school. He read out few English words to the class and asked boys to write them down. Everyone did. Mohan wrote all words correctly except one. He could not spell the last word 'Kettle'. Seeing Mohan's problem, the teacher made a sign behind the Inspector's back that he should copy the word from his neighbouring student. But Mohan ignored his signs. After the Inspector left, the teacher scolded him. "I told you to copy from your neighbour," he said angrily. "Couldn't you even do that correctly?" Every one laughed. But Mohan was bold and brave enough to say that he couldn't cheat. I would not have any respect for myself if I cheated.

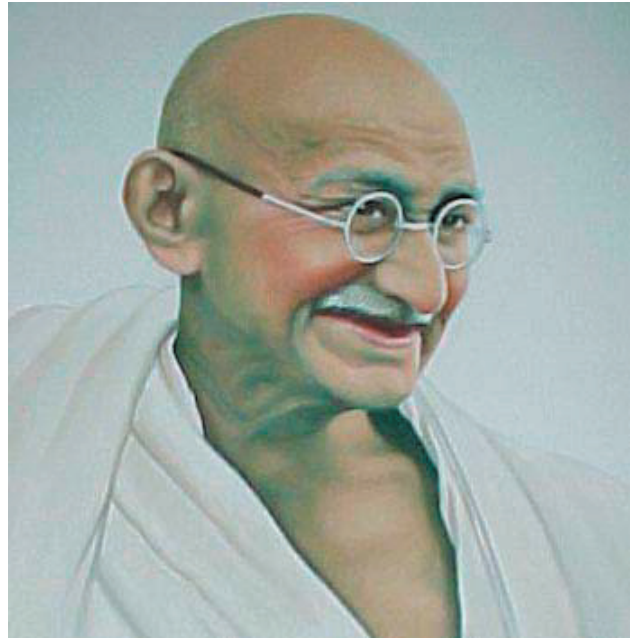
Father's death changed his behavior

When Mohan was about 13-14 years old, he fell into bad company and picked up many bad habits. It was because of these bad habits, that unknown to his parents, he was once forced to sell a part of his gold bracelet. However, he soon realised his mistake, and amply repented his sinful behaviour. He decided to make a clean breast of everything to his father, but he lacked the courage to face him. So instead, he wrote a letter to his father, mentioning all the sinful deeds he had done. He gave the letter to his father, and stood by his bedside, his face hanging down in shame. At that time his father was seriously ill. He felt miserable when he read the letter. Tears rolled down his cheeks, but he did not say a single word to his son. It was too much for him to bear. Right then he resolved that he would always lead a truthful and honest life, and throughout his life he stuck to his resolution.

Simple living, high thinking:

Once Mohandas Gandhi was invited to have a tea at Buckingham Palace in London with King George V and Queen Mary. Everyone including England's political figures and royal people was well dressed. Someone knew about Gandhi's simple lifestyle. He

already informed Gandhi to put on good and wealthy clothes while going to the palace. But Gandhi ignored his advice and arrived at the palace wearing only a loincloth, sandals, and a shawl, which he had woven himself from thread he had made on his own spinning wheel. King George met him dressed in fine clothing, with gold medals and ribbons on his chest. The king and the queen asked him, "Why do you wear such clothes? Don't you feel embarrassing amongst us?" Gandhi confidently replied, "I wear what common Indians wear. I came here as a representative of common Indian people." Then jokingly he said, "In your country, you wear plus fours. But I prefer to wear minus fours."



When Gandhi ji was in South Africa, he had a German friend named Kallenbach. He was a rich man and had a great respect for Gandhi ji. Once Gandhi ji was put in a jail. When he was released, Kallenbach bought a new car and went to receive him. When Gandhi ji realized that his German friend bought a new car just to receive and take him home, he refused to enter the car. He painfully replied, "It is stupid to spend so much money on a car when other people are suffering. You must return it to the seller before doing anything else."

Humiliation in South Africa changed his life:

One day in South Africa, Gandhi ji was travelling from Durban to Pretoria in the first class compartment of a train. Next station, a Britishman also boarded the compartment. On seeing Gandhiji, the Britishman got furious. He called the Railway officer, and both ordered him to get out of the train. Since Gandhiji had purchased a first class ticket, he refused to do so. However, they paid no heed to him. Gandhiji also did not budge. Finally the police were summoned. They pushed him out of the compartment and threw his luggage out of the window. Gandhiji had to spend the whole night on the platform. This was one of the many humiliating experiences Gandhiji had to face. Gandhi ji made a resolve to fight against unjust, inhuman laws and discrimination.

Mohandas Gandhi was full of virtues. He held high moral and values in politics, personal life and social life. His simple living, high thinking, honesty, truthfulness and "walk the talk" behavior have made him one of the greatest sons of India. His all life is inspiring for entire human being.





Vijayadashami

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

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

Vijayadashami - a festival of victory

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

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

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

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

Celebrations

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

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



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

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

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

Vijayadashami as a HSS Balagokulam Utsav

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

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



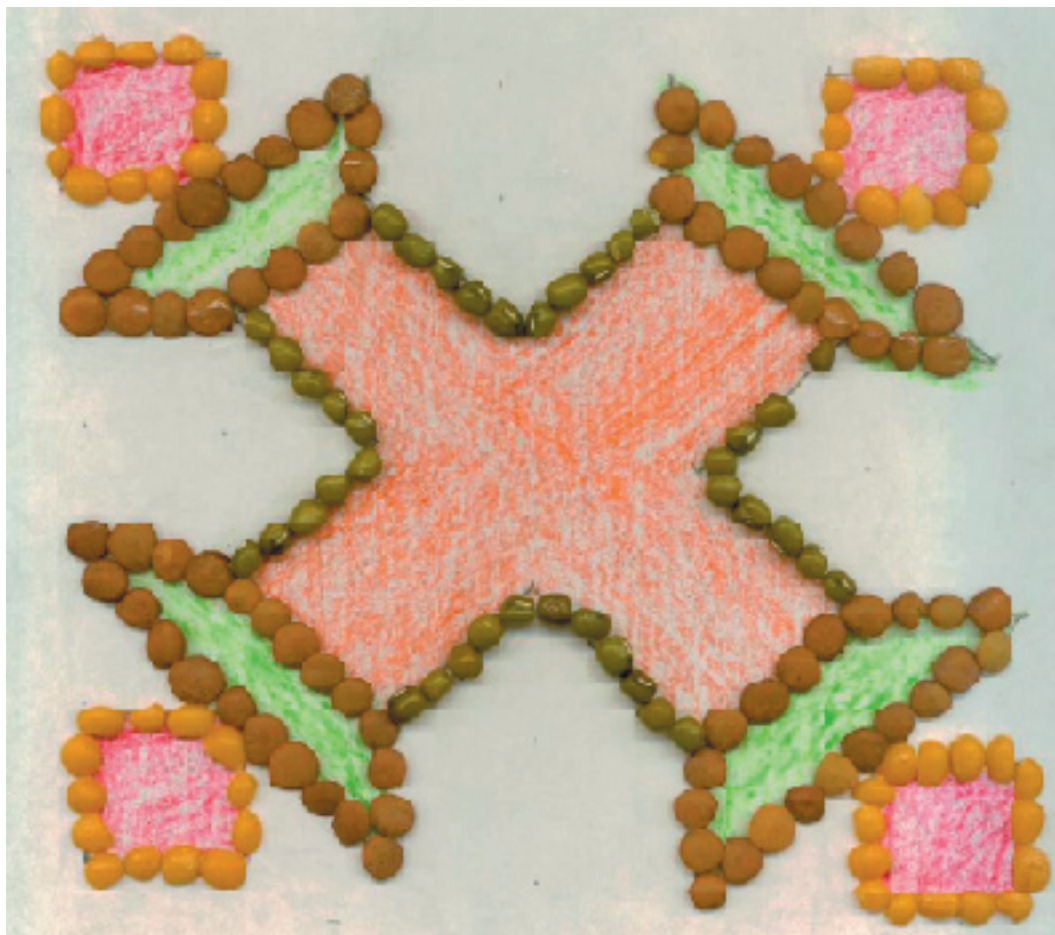
Organizing Hindu society outside Bharat is also necessary which is one of the objectives of HSS. As Vijayadashami being a festival of victory and a birth day of RSS, HSS too has given it a place in it's six utsavs.



RANGOLI

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

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



Shloka

त्वमेव माता च पीता त्वमेव त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव
त्वमेव विद्या च द्रविणम् त्वमेव त्वमेव सर्वं मम देवदेव ।

tvameva mātā ca pītā tvameva tvameva bandhuśca sakhā tvameva
tvameva vidyā ca draviṇam tvameva tvameva sarvaṁ mama devadeva |

Meaning: You are mother, father, brother, and a friend. You are knowledge, wealth, you are everything, you are my god.

Subhashitam (Words of wisdom)

अपि स्वर्णमयी लंका न मे लक्ष्मण रोचते ।

जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी ॥

api svarNamayI laMkA na me laxmaNa rochate |
jananI janmabhUmishcha svargAdapi garIyasI ||

Meaning: O Lakshmana! Although Lanka is golden, it does not appeal to me. Mother and motherland are superior to the heaven.

Amrutvachan (Quotes)

It is wrong to assume that science inclines us to materialistic view of the world, that everything in the world can be reduced to matter and motion. If science tells us anything it is this, that the mind of man is capable of grasping the secrets of nature and is thus superior to nature. There is a non-natural element in man if we identify nature with our environment, which sits in judgement over nature and grasps its character and tendencies.

- Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

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The Story of Krishna and Narakasura

Deepavali is one of the most important festivals celebrated by Hindus all over world. It is generally a five day festival of which Naraka Chaturdasi is a fourth day. On this day, lord Krishna slain the wicked demon Narakasura. That is why it is called Naraka Chaturdarsi. Chaturdasi means 4th day according to Hindu calendar. The story of killing of the demon Narakasura is exciting. Let us try to learn it.

Bhoomi Devi (mother Earth) had a son named Naraka. Even though Naraka was the son of a divine mother, he had the nature of a demon. Naraka was powerful and he took pleasure in terrorising the inhabitants of the three worlds. He would raid and plunder the kingdoms of the earth. He didn't even leave the women and would kidnap them for his own pleasure. He heard that lord Indra had thousands of divine elephants. Now greedy Narakasura wanted to possess everything, so he attacked the heaven. Now he was being called as Narakasura.

Indra was helpless. Narakasura destroyed the heaven. He himself began pursuit of the devas. While pursuing the devas, a glimmering object far away caught his eye. Upon inspection, he realised that the glimmering object was mother Aditi's (the mother of the devas) earrings. He assaulted mother Aditi and grabbed her earrings. Indra felt humiliated. His mother was assaulted, so he wanted a revenge. He knew that there was only one person who was a match for Narakasura. It was lord Krishna.

Indra reached Krishna's palace when Krishna was spending quality time with his wife Satyabhama. He told Krishna about the happenings and begged him for his help. Krishna was enraged that Narakasura might lay his hands on mother Aditi and many other women. He said that Narakasura must die for his insolence and a 'woman' should be a reason for his death. So Krishna decided to take Satyabhama also with him into battle with Naraka.

Krishna alongwith Satyabhama rode his mount Garuda (a giant eagle) and travelled all the way from Dwaraka to Aasam (East side of India) to punish Narakasura. He

made way towards Narakasura's fortress. An impenetrable barrier of magic mountains surrounded Narakasura's fortress. The mountains were such that a barrier would come up from any side that Krishna tried to enter the fortress. Krishna, unperturbed, hurled his mace at the barrier and shattered the entire mountain range in one blow. A downpour of magical weapons rained down on them. Krishna fired multiple arrows and destroyed all the weapons. In this manner Krishna destroyed countless other magical barriers and finally reached Naraka's fortress.

Narakasura's palace was guarded by the five-headed demon Mura. Mura hurled countless weapons at Krishna including his favourite weapon sataghini (a thunderbolt), but Krishna shot each one down with his bow and arrow. Then Krishna picked up his flying discus and hurled it towards Mura dislocating Mura's five heads. Mura fell to the ground, dead. Since Krishna killed the demon Mura, he is also known by the name Murari (killer of Mura).

Now Krishna and Satyabhama challenged Naraka to battle. The Battle was furiously fought between them. Since Krishna wanted a woman to be a reason for Narakasura's death, he fainted in a pre-ordained divinely plan adopted to empower Satyabhama. Thus together they killed the wicked Narakasura.

Bhoomi Devi, Narakasura's mother, was extremely happy after the death of his own wicked son. She sang hymns in praise of Krishna and begged him to take Narakasura's son Bhagdatta under his protection. Krishna placed Bhagdatta on the throne and then freed all of Narakasura's prisoners including 16,000 women prisoners. The devas showered Krishna with flowers from the heavens.

Krishna freed all 16,000 Narakasura's prisoners, but nobody from the society came forward to accept them. They pleaded Krishna, "You are the protector of the Universe. Can't you protect us?" Thus Krishna pledged that he would bear the responsibility of them and he gave them a shelter and protection.





Story of the River Ganga

River Ganga is one of the most sacred rivers for Hindus. It has religious as well as historical importance. Many many temples and spiritual places are located at the banks of the river such as Haridwar, Prayag (Alahabad), Kashi. The source stream of the river Ganga is originated in the Himalayas which is called as Gangotri.

The river Ganga is mentioned in several Hindu scriptures such as Vedas, Ramayana and Mahabhart. It is personified and worshipped as a Goddess by Hindus. According to Puranas, the river Ganga was in the heaven and it was brought down to the Earth. There is an amazing story behind the Ganga's journey from Heaven to the Earth. Let us try to understand it.

There used to be mighty king Sagara. He performed a sacrificial ritual which would make him an undisputed ruler of the Earth. As a part of rituals, he let the horse loose to wonder on the earth followed by his strong army and sixty-thousand sons to protect the horse. Once, the horse stopped at the hermitage of Sage Kapila. Sage Kapila was an accomplished yogi with great spiritual powers. He was performing penance at that time. King Sagara's sons thought that sage Kapila himself put hurdle on the path of the horse. They disturbed him and called him a thief. Sage Kapila couldn't bear these false accusations. He opened his eyes and because of his spiritual powers, king Sagara's all sons got burnt and turned into ashes.

King Sagara heard this news and felt very sorry. He went to sage Kapila's hermitage. He apologized sage Kapila and requested him to forgive his sons' sins and purify their souls. Sage Kapila said, "The river Ganga has that power to purify whoever crosses her path. She can liberate your sons. You will have to bring her on the earth."

Determined king Sagara handed over his throne to his grand-son and went to the Himalayas for penance to please lord Brahma and request him to let river Ganga flow to the earth. But unfortunately he died before he accomplished the task. After his death, his grand-son and the next generations tried the same but failed. Only the seventh descendant of the king Sagara was successful.

The seventh descendant of king Sagara, Bhagirath, was a great king. He did severe

penance to please lord Brahma. Lord Brahma pleased with his penance and sacrifice. He told Bhagirath, "Hey King! Ganga can flow to the earth but the earth itself will not be able to bear the Ganga's massive torrential force and all life will be washed away in its flood. The only way is to pray lord Shiva whose matted hair can hold sufficient power to withstand the Ganga's forceful fall."

As advised by lord Brahma, king Bhagirath again sat for penance to please lord Shiva. Lord Shiva soon appeared before him and agreed to catch Ganga's fall in his matted hair-locks and thus soften its fall.

Everything was planned. Lord Shiva stood on the peak of Himalayas to catch the Ganga. Ganga with her tremendous force flowed towards the earth. Lord Shiva caught her in his matted hairs and released only a very small current of her. Thus river Ganga started flowing on the earth. She followed wherever Bhagirath went.

Still Bhagirath had to overcome one more hurdle. Impulsive and restless Ganga was like a playful maiden. When she was following Bhagirath, she saw sage Jahnu's hermitage. Out of curiosity, she entered the hermitage. As a result, entire area got flooded and everything was washed away including all sacrificial fires. Enraged sage Jahnu didn't like Ganga's intrusion. With his spiritual powers, he drank all her waters. All traces of Ganga were gone!! Bhagirath was in a fix. He explained sage Jahnu about his objective and prayed him to release Ganga.

Sympathetic sage Jahnu appreciated Bhagirath's hard work in bringing Ganga to the earth. He made a cut in his left thigh and the waters of Ganga flew out like a fountain. Thus Ganga is also known as Jahni, the daughter of sage Jahnu.

Now all hurdles were over. Bhagirath showed Ganga the way to the ashes of his ancestors (King Sagara's sixty thousand sons). As soon as Ganga touched the ashes, the ancestors sins got washed away. They arose and ascended towards heaven. Carrying away their mortal remains, Ganga merged into the ocean.

Because of Bhagirath's relentless efforts, Ganga left her abode in heaven and flowed to the earth. That is why she is also known as Bhagirathi. Hindus believe that bathing in Ganga on certain occasions causes the forgiveness of sins and attain the salvation.





Sage Dadhichi

King of Gods, Indra, himself was asking a saintly man, "We are in difficulty. We need your bones for our survival. You must make up your mind for such a sacrifice." A man, without hesitation or fear, calmly said, "All right. Man has to die one day or other. It is better to die in order to benefit of others. I shall give up my body in a few minutes. You can have my bones then!!" Who was this man who readily sacrificed himself for the sake of others? His name was Sage Dadhichi. He did it as if it was not a big deal for him at all!!!!

In many pauranik stories, we have heard a common man asking for a help from Gods. But in this story, God Indra Himself asks for a help from a man. Story goes like this.....

Once a demon named Vritra became very strong, terrible. He was most cruel. He was born as a brahmin, but because of his behavior and deeds, he became a demon. Soon a battle between demons and gods broke out. Vrita was a leader of demons. He gained an upper hand over gods. The gods could not bear their blows and were in despair.

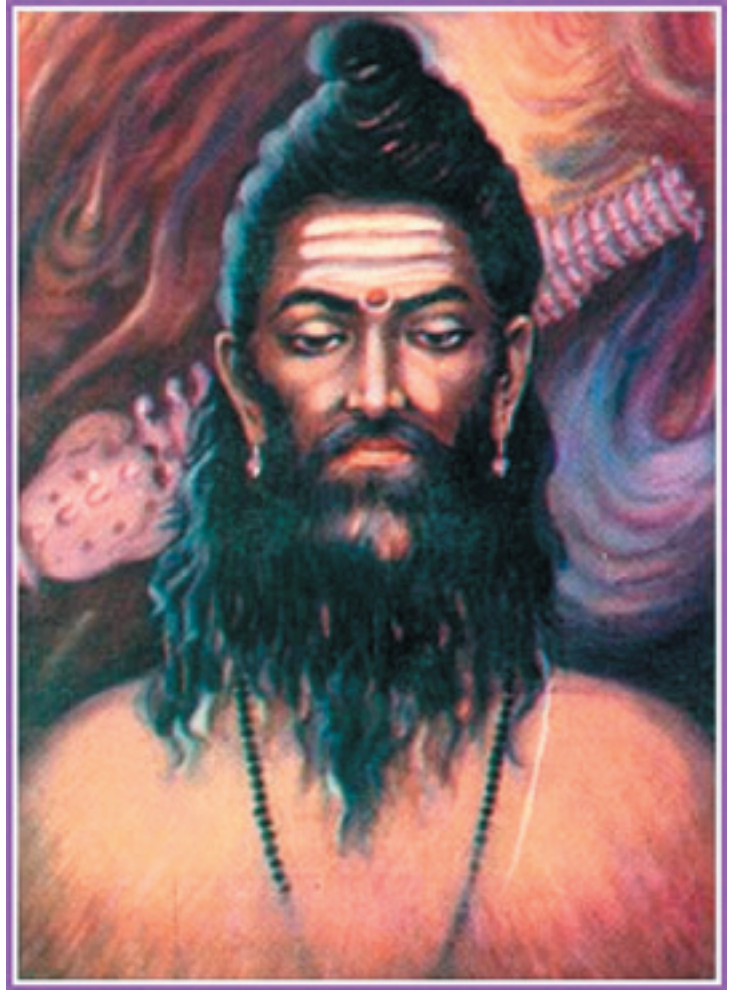
The gods approached lord Brahma for help. Lord Brahma took them to lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu, bearing the responsibility of protecting the world, consoled Indra saying, "Hey Indra! Don't be afraid. The demon Vrita is indeed powerful. But there is a way to defeat him. Go to sage Dadhichi's hermitage. His bones contains weapons potent enough to destroy Vrita."

As advised by lord Vishnu, Indra approached sage Dadhichi. Dadhichi was living a pious life of penance and spirituality. Offering his courtesies, Indra said, 'Hey rishivarya, lord Vishnu has sent me to you. We need a favor!' Dadhichi replied, "Lord Vishnu has sent you? Then I don't have to think. Please tell me how can I help you?"

Indra told sage Dadhichi about the demon Vrita. He implored, "We are in a great trouble. Lord Vishnu has told us that your bones have enough power to kill Vrita. On

behalf of all gods, I request you to give us your bones so that we can kill him." Sage Dadhichi knew that giving his bones means giving up his life. But he didn't hesitate even for a moment. Fearlessly he said, "Hey Indra, I am a man. And man has to die one day or other. It is a better to die for others. I am ready to give up my life. You can have my bones then. May you gain victory!" By saying this, with his spiritual power, he gave up his life. Indra was extremely grateful to him.

Indra then took sage Dadhichi's bones to Vishwakarma. Vishwakarma made sharp and deadly weapons out of Dadhichi's bones. The gods took those weapons. They again went to the battlefield and challenged the demon Vrita. Vrita was little surprised. He thought how come gods can challenge him. He came out with his full capacity.



Now gods had powerful weapons made out of sage Dadhichi's bones. They gained physical strength and confidence. They valiantly fought against the Vrita and his demon army. Indra specially got a fatal weapon Vajra (thunderbolt), the most powerful weapon with a hundred bulging knots. Indra, possessing Vajra, bravely fought against Vrita and destroyed him. The victorious gods shouted in joy "Hurrah!" At last good overcame evil.

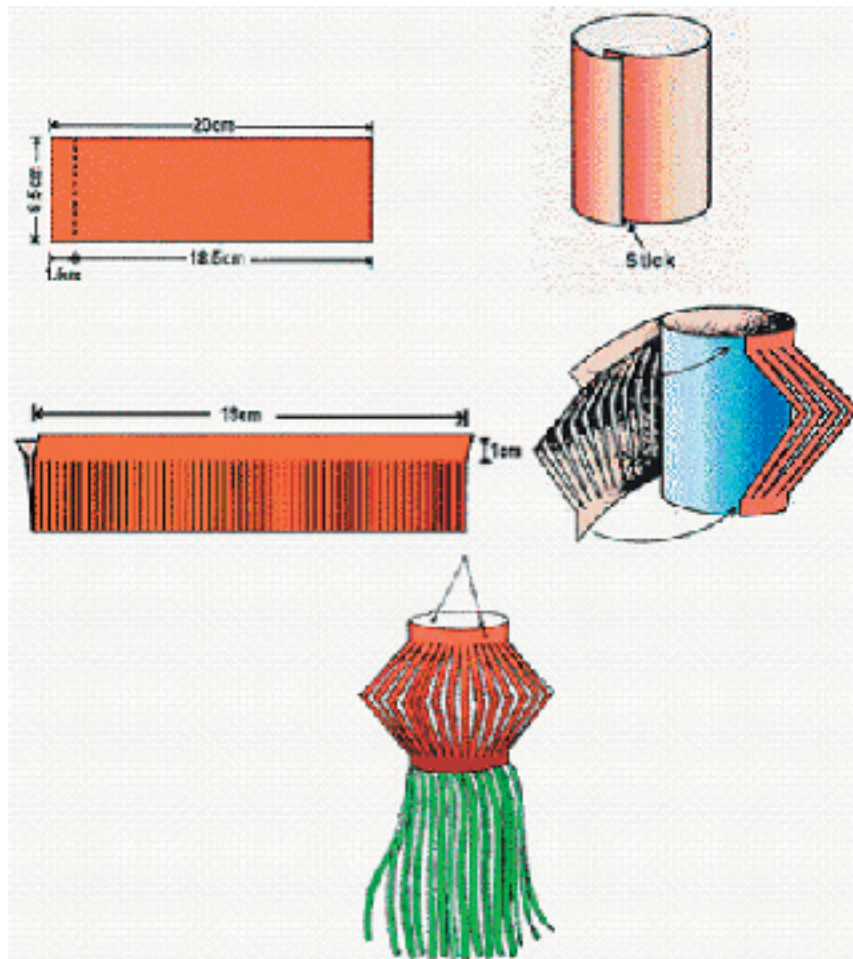
The gods won the war because of sage Dadhichi's worthy donation. As Dadhichi gave up his life for the sake of others, he attained immortality and everlasting fame. His image of sacrifice will be cherished in everybody's heart. Considering sage Dadhichi as a role model, we should also try to do little sacrifices for the sake of others.



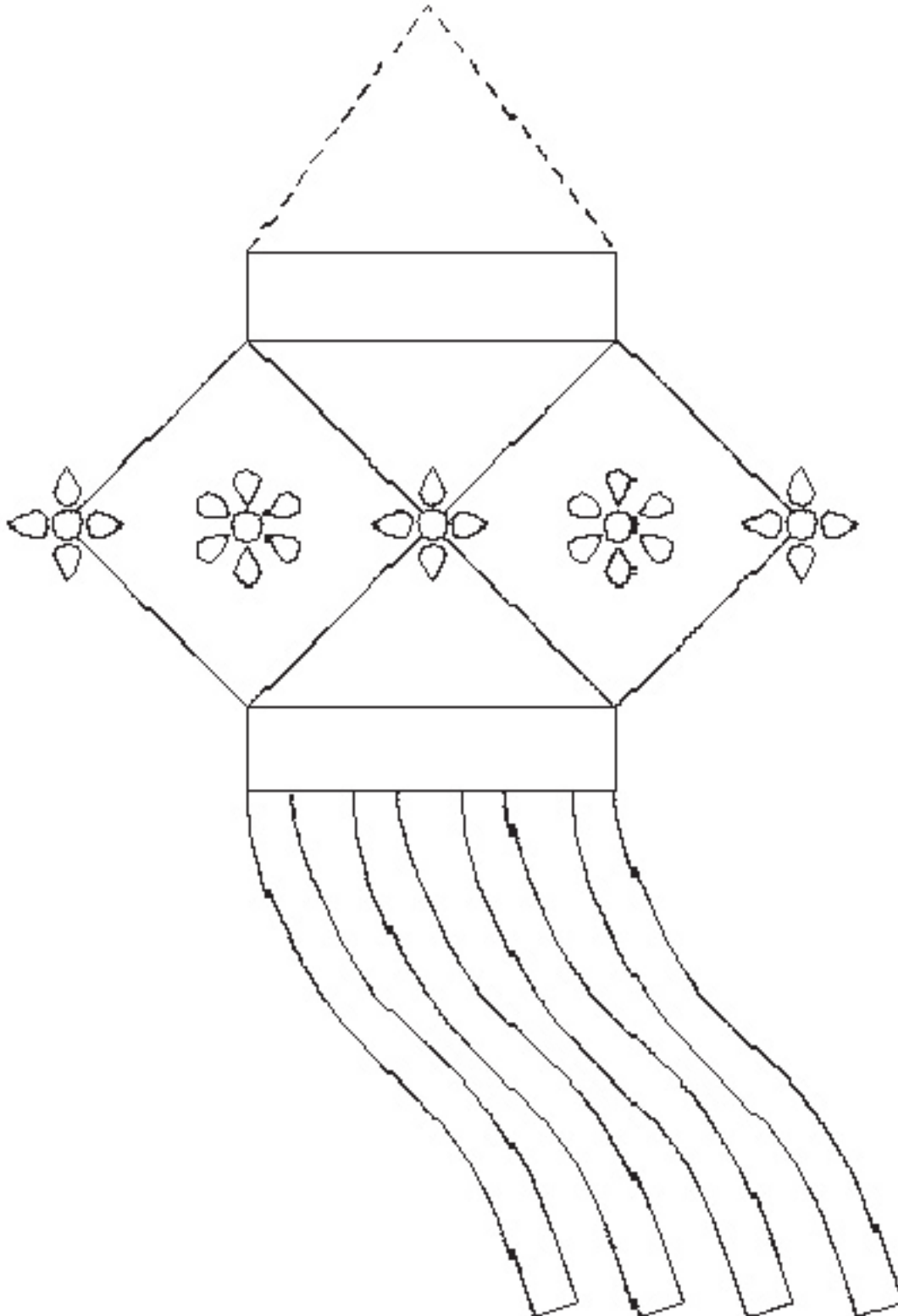
Make your own Aakash Diya (Kandil)

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

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



Aakash Diya (kandil) for coloring



Shloka

मालाकमन्दलु धरह् करपद्मयुग्मे मध्यस्थ पाणि युगले दमरु त्रिशोलं ।
अध्यस्थ उर्ध्व करयोः शुभ शंखचक्रे वन्दे तमत्रिवरदम् भुजषट्कयुक्तम् ॥

mālākamaṇḍalu dharah karapadmayugme madhyastha pāṇi yugale damaru triśoolam |
adhyastha urdhva karayoḥ śubha śaṅkhacakre vande tamatrivaradam bhujashaṭkayuktam ||

Meaning: I meditate on Lord Dattatreya, the son of Atri, who has six hands, who holds the rosary and water-vessel in two hands, with damaru and spear in the other two hands, and with conch and discus in the upper two hands. mother, father, brother, and a friend. You are knowledge, wealth, you are everything, you are my god.

Subhashitam (Words of wisdom)

सत्येन धार्यते पृथिव सत्येन तपते रविः ।
सत्येन वायवो वान्ति सर्व सत्ये प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

satyena dhAryate pR^ithwi satyena tapate raviH |
satyena vAyavo vAnti sarvaM satye pratiShThitam ||

Meaning: The earth is borne by the truth. The sun heats due to the truth. The winds blow due to the truth. Everything is based on the Truth.

Amrutvachan (Quotes)

The qualities, which are needed for scientific research, are also those emphasized in religion, rigorous discipline, and suppression of personal preferences, disinterestedness and absorption in the nature of the object.

- Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

har har bam bam hindu bankure hai ham

har har bam bam hindu bankure hai ham
 chir vijay ki chaah se badh rahein hai yeh kadam
 vishwa ko uthayenge Hindu dheer-veer hum
 har har bam bam hindu bankure hai ham ||
 mahan hindu dharma ki parampara mahan hai
 yugon yugon se dharma ki divya aan baan
 haiyuddha ho ki shanti ho karma, dharma, kranti ho
 vishwa jaanta hai yah ham nahin kisi se kam ||
 kal chakra vakra hai, purnima aman ho
 disha disha prahar hai, ham sabhi satark ho
 ab na deena heena ham, rahena jai koyi bhram
 kal ke pravaah ko mod kar hi lenge ham ||
 Vamshi ki taan hai, geet-geet gyan hai,
 Kadam-kadam saja hua sej hai tufan hai,
 Aankh-aankh jwal hai, bhuja-bhuja krupan hai,
 desh-vishwa ki suno, hai jayeen jawan hum ||

Meaning:

Hey! Hey! We are brave Hindus.
 We are wanting lasting victory and moving toward this.
 Let us awaken the world, we brave Hindus.
 The great Hindu Dharma has great traditions.
 For ages it has brought divine prestige and customs to the country.
 Whether in war or peace, in good works, Dharma, or revolution,
 the people of the world know that we are not less than anyone.
 The times are troubled. The full moon's brightness must not give way to new moon's darkness.
 Blows are coming from every direction, but we are all alert.
 Now we are not poor and deprived, so let there be no illusion.
 We can even stop the flow of time.
 Hear the call of the ancestors. Learn the knowledge of the songs.
 We are all ready to step forward, whether the future is bright or stormy.
 All eyes are on fire. All arms are brandishing swords.
 Listen, country and world! We are the victorious soldiers.



Narayanaguru

Bharat (India) has been a birth place for numerous great scholars including social reformers, spiritual leaders, political leaders, and scientists. Narayanaguru was one of them. He was a spiritual leader, and a great social reformer also. Let us try to get some more knowledge about Narayanaguru.

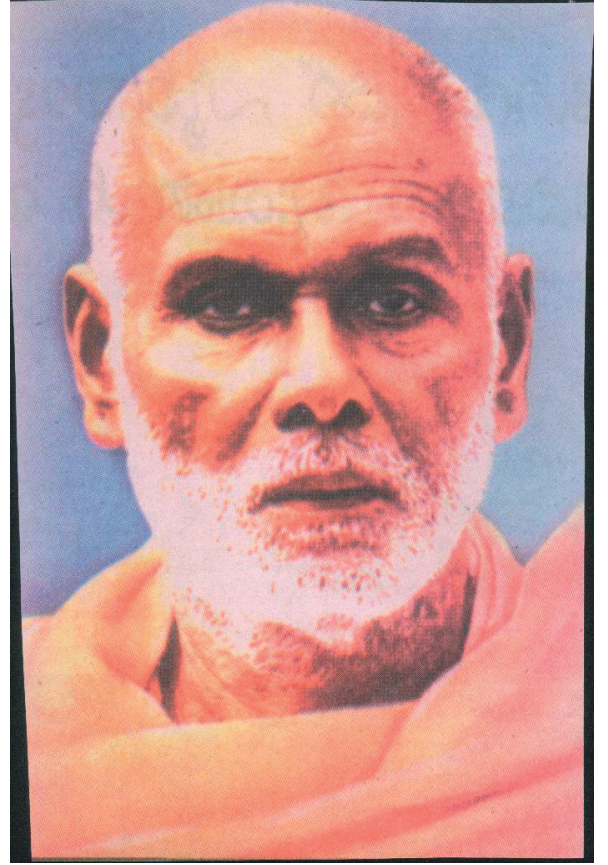
Narayanaguru was born on August 12th 1854 in Champazendy village of Kerala state of Bharat. Madan Asan and Kutti were his parents. Everyone including his parents used to call him as 'Nanu'.

Young Nanu was slim, active and very clever. Practicing Yoga was his favourite. He used to do all his work by himself such as washing his cloths, cooking his own food. In early age, he learnt samskrita language and studied the Vedas and the Upanishadas. He was quite interested in reciting Ramayana and explaining it to others. As he turned into young adult, he got married to a daughter of a local doctor. But his wife passed away in a young age. Soon his parents also died.

After losing his parents and wife, Nanu engaged himself in a spiritual sadhana. When it didn't help, he became parivrajaka (one who wanders from place to place in quest of the Truth). Once he came to a place called Aruvipuram. He liked this place so much that he decided to stay there for meditation. He entered into deeper meditation. At last, he realized peace of mind and confidence and faith in life. He realized that true joy/happiness lied in doing good to others. He found another way of worshipping God - working for social welfare. He founded an Ashram and built a Shiva-temple there. Soon, people started calling him Narayana-Guru.

Narayanaguru was a great social reformer. He didn't stand with untouchability and unnecessary rituals. He allowed all to his Shiva temple. According to him, priest, rituals or animal sacrifice are not necessary to worship the God but the true and pure heart. He showed people a new way of worshipping the God. Soon, his Shiva temple became a place of pilgrimage. People from far places including neighbouring country Sri-Lanka started visiting this place.

After handing over the management of Shiva temple to others, Narayanaguru shifted his stay to other place called Varkala. Here, he worshipped the Goddess - Amba. Soon, this place also became a place of pilgrimage. Narayanaguru opened many institutions in this area to teach Samkrita. This place was also open for all and there was no place for superstition and bad practices such as animal sacrifice. Some bad elements of the society tried to harm him. But Narayanaguru won their hearts also.



Narayanaguru wrote many books in Samskrita and his mother language Malayalam. His books reflect his philosophy in a nutshell. Particularly his book - Jati Mimamsa (an inquiry on Caste) and a poem are very popular and had a great significance. The gist of this poem is: "One caste, one religion, one God for all the people of the world; one form and the same blood in all; I cannot find any differences." All those who possess humanity are human beings and they are equal. His message to all was: "Sarve Janah Sukhino Bhavantu" and "OM Sahodaryam Sarvatra" It means - "May all be happy" and "Let there be brotherhood everywhere". He practiced and also encouraged others to practice these principles.

Narayanaguru knew that spiritual sadhana and worshipping God may help individuals to attain happiness. But what about the society and country? In one of his messages, he said, "The wealth of a country cannot increase if the people do not engage themselves in industry. Our children should be trained in Industrial Schools." He advised people to work hard, abide by law and live a good and descent life.

Narayanaguru was worthy of highest respect. Indeed, his teachings and doings helped to reduce the bad practices that were spread all over in the society. In his last days, he became seriously ill. At last, he took his last breath on September 20th 1928 at Varkala. He is going to be an inspiration to all. Best homage to him is to follow his principles and practice them.





Stories of Narayanaguru

Bharat (India) has been a birth place for numerous great scholars including social reformers, spiritual leaders, political leaders, and scientists. Narayanaguru was one of them. He was a spiritual leader and a great social reformer also. His life is always an inspiration to Hindus. Following paragraphs describe some inspirational stories (events) from his life.

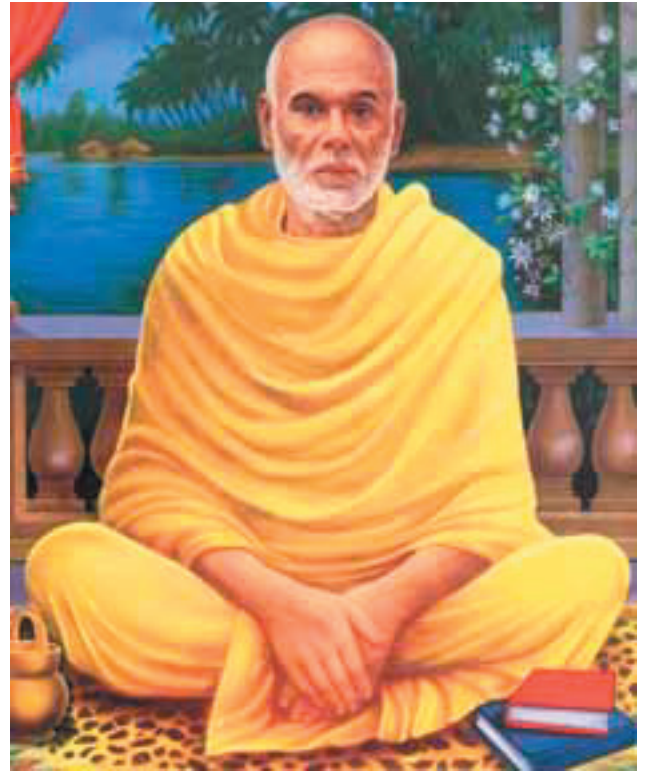
Once, Narayaguru built a Shiva temple. Because of his name and fame, thousands of people arrived for the inauguration ceremony with lot of curiosity. They were taken aback when they saw no grand preparation and no priest. When the auspicious time came, Narayanaguru offered arati to the Shiva-lingam and offered silent prayer saying, "May the Grace of Lord Shiva increase without bounds! May the poor and the hungry find happiness! May they progress well!! May all men be truthful and work hard to increase happiness of one another by mutual aid!" That is it! He concluded the inauguration ceremony. People were very surprised as they didn't see the usual stuff such as grand program with lots of rituals including animal sacrifice and reciting of Mantras by priests, etc. But the surprised people were also impressed by experience such as simple and sweet way of worshipping God. Narayaganaguru then explained that rituals and intervention of priest are not required to worship the God. What is required is just a pure heart with full of love for God.

In an another event, Narayanaguru denounced the untouchability. It was a day of Shivaratri. At the place called Varkala where Narayana Guru had initiated a pure and simple tradition, a big fair gathered. That was also like any other fair! To keep vigil the night over, there was music and Kirtans by devotees. Lord Shiva's image was carried on and elephant in procession. There was a display of fireworks. At midnight, a meeting was held. The Guru presided.

The meeting commenced. Speaker after speaker delivered long orations on the ideals of the Guru. The people assembled there heard in rapt attention. A small group of people sat apart from the others at a distance. They could not mix with the large group of people. They were 'untouchables' - unfit to be touched. Many people then had the wrong belief that some people were outcastes. The Guru's eyes turned towards

them. He then asked the speaker to stop for a while. He beckoned two children sitting among the 'untouchables' and spoke kind words to them. He asked them to sit by his side, and said to himself "These are also God's children a everyone else is." His compassion was visible in his eyes, which were wet with tears. The Guru then gave his message. It was as follows: "Without distinction of caste or birth, without hatred of other religions, we all live here in brotherhood. This is the ideal that is here. Let every one of you know this." Narayanaguru not only embraced untouchables but also allowed them to enter into the temples.

Once Ravindranath Tagore, a great poet, was on a visit to Southern India. Having heard about Narayanaguru, he went to meet him at his ashram. The people of the villages around the ashram welcomed the poet with great zeal.



Another great leader, Mahatma Gandhi, was also impressed by Narayanaguru's principles and his work. Narayanaguru was doing the same what Mahatma Gandhi was doing in other parts of the India - social reforms and awareness! Both had a great respect about each other. He completely supported his political and social activities. Because of their co-ordinated efforts, the local state Government gave harijans (untouchables) legal rights to enter into the temples.

Narayanaguru spent his entire life for the social and economical upliftment of the society. Just like other social reformers such as Swami Dayananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Phule, Narayanaguru also tried to eradicate the bad and unnecessary practices from the society. It is because of such social reformers, Hindu society has given up such practices and come out strong and sound. Narayanaguru took his last breath on September 20th 1928 at Varkala. He is going to be an inspiration to all. Best homage to him is to follow his principles and practice them.





Discipline of the Shakha (Balagokulam)

Weekly shakha (balagokulam) is the primary instrument of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS). It tries to achieve its goal by implementing various activities in the shakha. The most important factor of the shakha is its discipline. Every organization succeeds on discipline. And in order to maintain discipline, some general rules and guidelines are made to follow. HSS also has a set of rules that stem from basic courtesy. It encourages all shakha attending swayamsevaks and sevika to adhere to those rules. Let us try to understand what they are.

Shakha Adhikaris:

Each shakha has at least two adhikaris. We call them mukhya-shikshak and karyavaha. Mukhya-shikshak implements various activities in the shakha with the help of other shikshaks. Karyavaha looks after overall co-ordination.

Punctuality

An important part of discipline is punctuality. Coming five minutes early to shaakha will ensure that you do not miss any of the shakha sessions.

In Case you are late

Whenever you are late to shaakha, first approach the dhwaja, the Saffron flag, and do praNaam (salutation). Then go to your shaakha kaaryavah and do praNaam to him. The kaaryavah does praNaam to you in return. Now you might go to the Sangha-sthana (The place where shakha is conducted). Ask your mukhya shikshak and find out which gaNa (group) you have to join. Upon reaching the correct gaNa, request permission from the shikshak to join the activity.

Note: Remember not to disturb others who are already in the gana during this time.

Participation

The Shakha is a place where you can participate in a lot of activities. You are here to have fun. So... Enjoy. Participate in all activities to your best ability putting away all petty differences. Be attentive, and follow the shikshaks intructions at all times.

Courtesy

Be courteous towards everyone. All of you are here to achieve a common goal. You are here to understand Hindu moral values and the value of being good citizens. If you accidentally hurt someone while playing games, say sorry. During story time, raise your hand if you have a question. Questions should be asked only after the story is finished. The shikshak will ask you if you have any questions.

Presence

It is expected that you will be present throughout the Shakha. This way you will not miss any fun. You will also be able to take in all that is taught to you. You should leave only after the Prarthana.

In case you need to leave early

Sometimes, due to unvoidable circumstances you might have to leave before Shakha ends. In such cases first request permission to leave from your mukhyashikshak. Once you receive permission go to the dhwaja, do pranaam and then you may leave.

Home Study

To learn Hindu values you need to extend what you learn in the shakha to the outside world. You should memorize the shlokas, and song. Contemplate on the stories that you hear in the shakha and understand its moral.

Networking

Networking is an important component of coming to the shakha. The bonds that you form as swayamsevaks and swayamsevikas will carry you on the path to success as you grow older. When you see someone who has come to the shakha for the first time smile and make the person welcome. The shikshak will introduce the newcomer to the entire gana. After the prarthana at the end of the shakha, go up to the newcomer and introduce yourself. Ask questions but do not get too personal. Introduce the newcomer to other friends of yours in the shakha. This is the time for networking and getting to know each other. Form a circle of friends which is all-inclusive and practise all the values that you learn in the shakha, - courtesy, friendliness and enjoying each other.



Lord Dattatreya Picture for coloring



