



Sanskar Canada

Hinduism for kids Book-1

|| SA VIDYA YA VIMUKTAYE ||
॥ सा विद्या या विमुक्तये ॥

The source of "saa vidya yaa vimuktaye" is Vishnu Purana 1.19.41

*tat-karma yan-na bhandaaya
saa vidhyaa yaa vimuktaye;
Aayaasaaya aparam karma
vidyaa-anyaa shilpanaipunam*

Meaning:

Those acts alone which help one to avoid bondage are the rightful/righteous acts and that learning alone which leads one to release is real knowledge or vidya.

All other acts end up only in fatigue and all other learning is a mere exhibition of skill in arts which means Education is that which has Liberation as its aim or Knowledge is that which liberates.



Sanskar Canada

Welcome to Sanskar Gurukulam, a vibrant community where we explore, learn, and share our knowledge while connecting with like-minded individuals who are passionate about delving deeper into Sanatan Dharm. Our mission is to nurture the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of children, youth, adults, and seniors within our community.

At Sanskar, we continue to make efforts to collaborate and connect with one and all to create a space where our children have a sense of belonging and asking questions related to our culture and traditions.

This Shanti Mantra is taken from the Krishna Yajurveda Taittiriya Upanishad (2.2.2) . It is usually recited in schools as prayer before the start of the classes/lunch break in schools

ॐ सहनाववतु। सह नौ भुनक्तु सहवीर्यं करवावहै।

तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै।

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om sehna vavatu, sehanau bhunaktu sehveeryam Karvaavahai

Tejasvinaavdheetamastu Ma vidvishavahai

Om Shantihi, Shantihi, Shantihi.

Om, May we all be protected

May we all be nourished

May we work together with positive energy

May our wisdom grow (may we learn effectively and efficiently)

Let there be no conflict amongst us

Om, peace (in me), peace (in nature), peace (in divine forces)

Let's take our first dip in Hinduism/Sanatan Dharm

What is Culture and why is it important?

Imagine your favorite birthday party. What makes it special? Maybe it's the fun games you play, the delicious food you eat, the songs you dance to, and the stories you share with your friends and family. Culture is like that but for an entire group of people. It's all the unique things that make them who they are: their traditions, celebrations, music, food, and stories.

Why Traditions and Culture Matter?

1. Feeling Part of a Team:

Imagine you're on a soccer team, all wearing the same uniform and playing together. It makes you feel like you belong and are part of something special. Traditions and culture do the same thing for families and communities, making everyone feel like they are part of a big, happy team / family.

2. Celebrating Joy and Comfort:

Think about the joy of cooking with your family or dressing up in a traditional outfit for a special occasion, celebrating a fun holiday. Traditions are like warm hugs that make us feel happy and safe, showing us that we're part of something big and meaningful.

3. Time Travel with Special Memories:

Traditions are like magical time machines that help us remember and relive the best moments from the past. Every time you celebrate a special occasion, you're not just having fun—you're keeping those special memories alive and sharing them with new friends and family.

4. Discovering Our Family's Amazing Story:

Just like learning about your grandparents and great-grandparents helps you understand where you come from, traditions and culture teach us about our family's adventures and values. They help us see the stories and lessons that make our family and community unique.

5. Growing with New Adventures:

Traditions and culture are like exciting adventures that help us learn and grow. They show us new ways to explore, understand, and connect with the world around us, making our journey through life even more exciting and meaningful.

So, traditions and culture are important because they help us feel connected, happy, and safe. They remind us of special times and teach us about our family and the world.

What is Sanatan Dharm?

Imagine a huge banyan tree:

1. Roots and Branches: The banyan tree has many roots that grow down into the ground and many branches that spread out wide. These roots and branches are connected, making the tree strong and stable. Think of Sanatan Dharm like this banyan tree. It has many different teachings, stories, and practices that grow from the same strong roots, making it a big and important part of life. Simply said, Sanatan Dharm essentially recommends a way of life, one that is in harmony with nature, is based on mutual respect and treats everyone around like a family member. (Reference : Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam - वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्)

2. The Tree Grows Over Time: The banyan tree grows bigger and bigger over time. In the same way, Sanatan Dharm has been around for a very long time and continues to grow and change as people learn new things

and share new ideas. Over time, these learnings and new ideas are then integrated back into the fabric of Sanatan Dharm, so that future generations can benefit from them.

3. Different Parts, One Tree: Even though the banyan tree has many branches and leaves, it's still one tree. Similarly, Sanatan Dharm includes many different practices and beliefs, but they all come from the same core idea of doing good, being kind, and understanding more about life and the universe.

4. A Home for Many: The banyan tree provides a home for birds and animals. It gives shade and shelter. In the same way, So, just like the banyan tree with its many branches and roots, Sanatan Dharm is a rich and deep tradition with lots of different parts, all connected and growing together over time.

Let's Look Closer at this Banyan Tree

The Banyan Tree Trunk :

The trunk is the main part of the banyan tree that supports all the branches and roots. The trunk represents the **Vedas**- 4 Vedas:

1. Rigveda (ऋग्वेद)
2. Yajurveda (यजुर्वेद)
3. Samveda (सामवेद)
4. Atharvaveda (अथर्ववेद)

They are the oldest and most important texts, like the main support of the tree. They give the basic knowledge that everything else builds upon.

The Main Branches:

These branches represent the **Epics**. They are like large, exciting stories that grow from the trunk. There are two main branches:

Mahabharat (महाभारत): It is one of the longest and most complex stories in the world. It tells the tale of a great war between two groups of royal

cousins, the **Pandavas** and the **Kauravas**, who fought for the throne of the kingdom of **Hastinapura**. The story is filled with heroic deeds, moral dilemmas, and lessons about life, duty, and righteousness. One of the most famous parts of the Mahabharata is the **Bhagavad Gita** (भगवत् गीता), a sacred text where Lord **Krishna** (कृष्ण) advises the warrior prince **Arjuna** about his duties as a soldier and the nature of life and death.

The Mahabharat is not just a tale of war but a deep exploration of human nature, justice, and the complexities of life. It is a cornerstone of Indian culture and philosophy, influencing millions of people over the centuries.

Ramayan (रामायण): Another important epic telling the adventurous story of Bhagwan Shri Ram (राम), a great hero. The Ramayana is not just a story of adventure; it also teaches important lessons about duty, loyalty, love, and the triumph of good over evil. It is one of the most beloved and influential stories in Indian culture, with its characters and morals inspiring people for thousands of years.

The Smaller Branches and Leaves:

Smaller branches and leaves that come off the main branches, creating a lush, full canopy. These represent the **Purans** (पुराण). They are like the smaller branches and leaves, full of colorful stories about different gods and goddesses as well as teachings on religious and moral values, are traditionally divided into three groups based on the deity they primarily glorify: Vishnu (विष्णु), Shiv (शिव), or Brahma (ब्रह्मा) - the holy trinity of gods in Sanatan Dharm / Hinduism. There are 18 Puranas, and they include:

Vishnu Puranas (Vaishnava Puranas):

1. **Vishnu Purana** - Focuses on the deeds of Lord Vishnu and his avatars, along with cosmology and genealogies of gods, sages, and kings.
2. **Bhagavata Purana** - Devoted to the life and teachings of Lord Krishna, and emphasizes devotion (bhakti) to Vishnu.
3. **Narada Purana** - Contains instructions on religious duties, stories of saints, and hymns dedicated to Vishnu.

4. **Garuda Purana** - Deals with the afterlife, rituals for the dead, and details of Hindu cosmology and ethics.
5. **Padma Purana** - Discusses the creation of the universe, the glory of Vishnu, and sacred places of pilgrimage.
6. **Varaha Purana** - Named after the boar incarnation of Vishnu, it describes the creation of the earth and the stories of Vishnu's avatars.

Shiv Puranas (Shaiva Puranas):

7. **Shiv Purana** - Chronicles the tales and legends of Bhagwan Shiv, his family, and the significance of Shiv worship.
8. **Linga Purana** - Focuses on the worship of the Shiv Linga and discusses the creation of the universe by Shiv.
9. **Skanda Purana** - The largest Purana, it narrates the life and deeds of Lord Skanda (Kartikeya), the son of Shiv.
10. **Agni Purana** - Covers a wide range of topics including rituals, cosmology, and stories related to both Vishnu and Shiv.
11. **Vayu Purana** - Focuses on Vayu (the wind god) and includes accounts of creation, mythology, and royal genealogies.
12. **Matsya Purana** - Named after the fish incarnation of Vishnu, it contains a variety of content including legends, pilgrimages, and temple construction.

Brahma Puranas (Brahma Puranas):

13. **Brahma Purana** - Primarily describes the creation of the universe and includes various legends and geographical information.
14. **Brahmanda Purana** - Details the origins of the universe and contains the famous Lalita Sahasranama and the story of the future Kalki avatar.
15. **Brahmavaivarta Purana** - Emphasizes the worship of Radha and Krishna, and includes stories of creation and the glory of Ganesh.
16. **Markandeya Purana** - Known for the story of the sage Markandeya and the popular Durga Saptashati (Devi Mahatmya).

17. **Bhavishya Purana** - Contains prophecies about the future (Bhavishya means future) and discusses rituals and moral conduct.
18. **Vamana Purana** - Tells the story of the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu, Vamana, and includes cosmological details and legends.

The Roots Spreading Out:

The roots that spread out from the trunk and branches, helping to anchor and nourish the tree. These roots represent the Other Important Texts. They help nourish and support the tree by providing extra wisdom and guidance. This includes:

1. **Brahma Sutras:** Texts explaining big ideas about the universe.
2. **Yoga Sutras:** Guides to practicing yoga and finding peace.
3. **Bhakti Literature:** Poems and songs from saints who loved and worshiped God.

So, the banyan tree helps us understand how the ancient Hindu scriptures are connected. The trunk is the foundation, the branches are the big stories, the smaller branches and leaves add detail and color, and the roots provide additional support and nourishment. All together, they create a strong, beautiful tree full of life and wisdom - Our Sanatan Dharm.

Ten Important Symbols

1. **Om (Aum - ॐ)** – the most important Hindu symbol, often used as the emblem of Hinduism
2. **Hands in prayer** – a sign of respect for the sacred, that which is dear to the heart
3. **Lotus (*padma*)** – symbol of purity/transcendence. Growing out of the mud, it is beautiful, and though resting on water, it does not touch it.
4. **Conch Shell** – used during arati: one of the four symbols of Vishnu. The others are the lotus, club and disc.

5. **Swastika** – an ancient solar sign considered to invoke auspiciousness.
6. **Trident (*trishul*)** – the symbol of Shiv; often carried by Shaivite *sannyasis* (renunciates).
7. **Kalasha** – coconut circled by mango leaves on a pot. Often used in rituals.
8. **Cow** – symbol of purity, motherhood and *ahimsa* (non-violence).
9. **Lotus feet (of guru or deity)** – touching the feet of superiors shows an attitude of submission and service.
10. **Dipak/lamp** – symbol of light.

What is Hindu Religion?

The term "**Hindu**" has a historical origin and was not originally used by the people who practiced what we now call Hindu. The word "Hindu" is derived from the Sanskrit word "**Sindhu**," which was the ancient name for the Indus River that flows through the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent. The people living around the Indus River were referred to as "Sindhus" in early Vedic texts.

When the Persians invaded the Indian subcontinent around 6th century BCE, they pronounced the word "Sindhu" as "**Hindu**" because their language did not have the "s" sound. Thus, they referred to the land beyond the Indus River as "Hindustan" and its people as "Hindus."

Over time, "Hindu" became a general term used by foreign invaders, travelers, and later, colonial powers to refer to the people of the Indian subcontinent, particularly those who practiced the local religious traditions.

The term "Hinduism" as a religion is relatively modern, becoming more formalized during the British colonial period in the 19th century. Prior to this, there was no single term that encapsulated the diverse spiritual, philosophical, and cultural practices we now associate with Hinduism.

Instead, practitioners referred to their religion as **Sanatana Dharma**, which means "eternal duty" or "eternal order."

The core principles of Hinduism are the principles of Sanatan Dharma. All the wisdom and teachings are derived from the Scriptures that are full of wisdom.

Core Values of Hinduism (Explained for Kids)

1. Do the Right Thing (Dharma)

Imagine you have a big job to do, like helping with chores at home or being a good friend at school. Dharma is like your special set of rules that helps you know the right thing to do. It's about being honest, kind, and responsible, just like following the rules in a game to play it well.

2. Good Actions Bring Good Things (Karma)

Think of Karma like planting seeds in a garden. If you plant seeds for beautiful flowers and take care of them, you'll get lovely flowers in return. In Hinduism, Karma means that the good things you do will come back to you, just like how the seeds you plant grow into something wonderful. So, if you help others and do good things, good things will happen to you, too!

3. Life is a Big Adventure (Reincarnation)

Imagine if you had a magical adventure where you could go on different journeys, like being a superhero or an explorer in each new chapter. In Hinduism, reincarnation is like getting a new adventure or story each time you live. It means that after we finish one life, we get a chance to start a new one. Every time we come back, we have a chance to learn, grow, and try to be even better.

4. Learning and Growing (Wisdom)

Just like how you learn new things in school and become better at your favorite hobbies, Hinduism teaches us that learning and growing are really

important. It's like gathering more pieces for your puzzle, helping you understand more about life and how to make good choices.

5. Respect and Love for Everyone (Unity)

Think about how you feel when everyone in your family works together and supports each other. Hinduism teaches us that we should respect and care for everyone, just like we do with our family and friends. We're all part of a big, connected family, and treating everyone with love and kindness makes our world a better place.

What do Hindus Practice?

1. **One Supreme God:** In Hinduism, **Brahman** is the term used to describe the ultimate reality or the one supreme God. While Brahman is the one supreme reality, it can take many forms to make it easier for people to understand and worship. For example, Brahman can appear as **Vishnu** (the protector), **Shiv** (the destroyer and transformer), or **Devi** (the goddess). Each of these forms is a different way to experience and connect with the one God.

Hinduism encompasses a vast array of gods and goddesses, each embodying different aspects of the divine and fulfilling various roles within the cosmic order. Here's an overview of some of the major deities in Hinduism, along with their attributes and significance:

1. **Brahma:** The creator in the Trimurti, the Hindu trinity.
2. **Vishnu:** The preserver and protector of the universe, part of the holy trinity.
3. **Shiv:** The destroyer and transformer within the Trimurti. Also known as Mahesh.
4. **Ganesh:** The remover of obstacles and the god of beginnings and wisdom.

5. **Surya:** The Sun god, representing light and vitality.
6. **Lakshmi:** The goddess of wealth, prosperity, and fortune.
7. **Saraswati:** The goddess of knowledge, music, and arts.
8. **Durga:** The goddess of strength, power, and protection.
9. **Parvati:** The goddess of love, fertility, and devotion, and the consort of Shiv.
10. **Kali:** The goddess of destruction and transformation, often associated with time and change.
11. **Hanuman:** The monkey god known for his devotion to Bhagwan Ram and his strength and courage. He is a central figure in the Ramayana.
12. **Krishna:** An avatar of Vishnu, celebrated for his role in the Mahabharata, his teachings in the Bhagavad Gita, and his playful exploits. He is often depicted as a young cowherd playing the flute.
13. **Ram:** Another avatar of Vishnu, known for his role in the Ramayan. He is depicted as the ideal king, husband, and hero.

Conceptual Framework:

- **Trimurti:** The trinity of **Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiv**, representing the cosmic functions of creation, preservation, and destruction.
- **Tridevi:** The divine feminine counterpart to the Trimurti, including Saraswati (knowledge), Lakshmi (prosperity), and Durga (strength).

2. **Celebrating Festivals and Traditions:** Festivals: Hindus celebrate vibrant festivals like Diwali (the Festival of Lights), Holi (the Festival of Colors), and Navratri (a festival celebrating the goddess Durga). These festivals are filled with fun, family gatherings, special foods, and rituals. Hindus participate in various rituals and ceremonies, such as lighting lamps, offering prayers, and performing pujas (worship ceremonies). These rituals help connect you with your spiritual side and family traditions.

- 3. Living According to Values:** Dharma: Hindus may learn about dharma, which means following your duties and doing what's right. This includes being kind, honest, and respectful to others, and taking care of your family and community. Karma: The idea of karma teaches that your actions have consequences. Being good and making positive choices helps create good results for yourself and others.
- 4. Finding Balance and Peace:** Yoga and Meditation: Hindus may practice yoga and meditation to stay healthy and find inner peace. These practices help you relax, focus, and connect with yourself on a deeper level. Spiritual Growth: Some Hindus may be on a journey seeking spiritual growth and understanding through learning, meditation, and personal reflection.

GANESH



Big Elephant Head: Ganpati has the head of an elephant. Elephants are known for being wise and gentle, and Ganpati is very wise and kind, too. His big elephant ears help him listen to everyone's problems and needs.

Human Body: Ganpati has a body like a human. This mix of an elephant head and human body makes him special and unique.

One Tusk: Ganpati has one tusk that is broken. This tusk is very important because it represents wisdom and the ability to overcome obstacles. It's like having a special tool to solve problems!

Four Hands: Ganpati has four hands, and each hand holds something different. He might hold a sweet treat (like a laddu), a rope (to help pull people towards good things), a lotus flower (representing purity), and an ax (to cut through difficulties).

Vehicle: Ganpati rides on a small mouse. The mouse is his friend and helps him move around. This shows that even if you're small, you can be important and helpful. The mouse also represents important qualities such

as resourcefulness, adaptability and intelligence, aligned with similar qualities of Ganesh.

Favorite Festival: Ganpati is celebrated with a big festival called Ganesh Chaturthi. People decorate their homes with colorful decorations, make beautiful Ganpati idols, and enjoy yummy sweets like laddus.

Symbol of Good Luck: Ganpati is known as the remover of obstacles. People believe that if they pray to Ganpati, he will help them overcome any challenges they face and bring good luck.

Ganesh Chaturthi

Ganesh Chaturthi is a special festival that celebrates the birthday of Lord Ganesh, who is the elephant-headed god in Hinduism. Lord Ganesh is known for being wise, kind, and a remover of obstacles, which means he helps people overcome problems.

Ganesh Chaturthi is called "**Chaturthi**" because it falls on the **fourth day** of the waxing moon (Shukla Paksha) in the Hindu lunar month of **Bhadrapad**. Since this festival is celebrated on the **fourth day** of the bright half of the moon (Shukla Paksha), it is referred to as **Ganesh Chaturthi**, marking the birthday of Lord Ganesh on this auspicious day.

The festival usually lasts for 10 days, filled with lots of fun and colorful celebrations. People make beautiful statues of Lord Ganesh out of clay and decorate them with flowers, colorful paints, and lights.

Homes and streets are decorated with bright lights and festive decorations to welcome Lord Ganesh. Families come together to offer sweets, like modaks (a favorite treat of Ganesh), and other delicious foods during the festival. Music and dancing are a big part of the celebration, with people singing songs and performing dances to honor Lord Ganesh.

On the last day, the statues of Lord Ganesh are taken in a joyful procession to a river or lake, where they are immersed in the water. This act is called "visarjan" and symbolizes letting go of the past and making a fresh start.

Ganesh Chaturthi is a time for happiness, family gatherings, and celebrating with lots of fun, making it a very special festival!

Facts about Ganesh

1. Ganesh is prominently known as the remover of obstacles. Because of this, many Hindus worship him before any major endeavor they undertake.
2. He is the son of Bhagwan Shiv and Parvati
3. He has a brother named Kartikeya

There are different stories in Hindu texts regarding the origin of Ganesh



1. Story-1

Once devas (gods) approached Shiv for help because they were being harassed by the demons. Shiv consented by producing from his mind a glowing child with the head of an elephant and a trident in one hand. From that point forward, Ganesh became known as the mind-born son of Shiv who would protect the devas. Shiv's wife Parvati then placed him on her lap and said that any endeavor,

whether human or divine, could only be successful after praying to Ganesh. Shiv then appointed Ganesh as leader of the ganas (a group of supernatural beings who serve as the attendants and followers of Bhagwan Shiv) - that's how the name Gana-Pati (the leader of Ganas).

2. Story-2

When Shiv created Ganesh, Parvati, who was bothered to have had no contribution to his creation, willed Ganesh's head to be turned into that of an elephant's. After seeing the elephant-headed child, Parvati felt great love for him, and then said no endeavor would succeed without a prayer to the boy.

3. Story-3

The most widely known account of Ganesh's birth centers around a particular time Parvati decided to take a bath. While Shiv was away meditating, Parvati removed a layer of oil and dust from her body, which she shaped into the figure of a young boy. She brought the boy to life and, after telling him he was her son, instructed him to stand guard while she went in to take a bath. When Shiv returned, Ganesh blocked his path, not allowing him to see Parvati. Unaware Ganesh was his son, Shiv became furious and fought the boy before eventually cutting off his head. After discovering what had transpired, Parvati became so sad, she threatened to destroy the heavens and earth. Shiv then pacified Parvati by instructing the ganas to go out and bring the head of the first living being they could find with its head pointed towards the north, known as the auspicious direction associated with wisdom. The ganas returned with the head of an

elephant, which Shiv placed on the trunk of Ganesh, bringing him back to life.

4. Story 4 - He's renowned for his wisdom and intelligence

Ganesh and his brother Kartikeya were once in competition to see who could circumambulate the earth quickest. As Kartikeya promptly flew off in a hurry, Ganesh devotedly circled his parents instead. Because Bhagwan Shiv and Parvati are considered to be the very center of creation, Ganesh was deemed the winner. Not only was he wise enough to understand the position his parents held in the universe, but he also demonstrated an important lesson taught throughout Hinduism: that a person should give deep reverence and honor to his or her parents.

5. Story-5 He transcribed the Mahabharata

When Vyasadeva was first inspired to author the Indian epic The Mahabharata, he asked Ganesh, who is famous for having a sharp memory and subtle intellect, to be his scribe. Ganesh agreed but did so under one condition: that Vyasadeva dictate

the entire account without stopping even once. Vyasadeva consented, but not before posing his own condition: that Ganesh could write down a stanza only after fully comprehending its essence. Ganesh accepted and proceeded to break off his own tusk to use as a pen. Thus, whenever Vyasadeva wanted a break from narrating, he would give a particularly complex clause that would require Ganesh to pause in order to fully understand its meaning.

MA SARASWATI



Who is Goddess Saraswati?

Goddess Saraswati is the goddess who represents knowledge, wisdom, and learning. She is very special because she helps people learn and grow smarter. If you love reading books, studying, or learning new things, you can think of Goddess Saraswati as a friend who guides and inspires you.

Goddess Saraswati is often shown wearing a beautiful white sari. White symbolizes purity and simplicity. She has a gentle and serene face, which makes her look very wise and calm.

She rides a swan or sometimes a peacock. The swan is known for its grace and the peacock is admired for its beauty. Both animals represent different qualities that Goddess Saraswati embodies, like wisdom and elegance.

She plays a veena, which is a musical instrument with strings. The veena is used to create lovely music, and it symbolizes her mastery over arts and learning. Through her music, she teaches us that knowledge can be harmonious and beautiful.

In addition to wisdom, Goddess Saraswati is also the goddess of the arts, including music, dance, and literature. She inspires artists and writers to create wonderful works and helps them express their creativity.

She holds several important things in her hands:

A book, usually Veda- which represents knowledge and learning.

A rosary (japa mala), symbolizing meditation and concentration.

Swan or peacock, her vehicle and symbols of grace and beauty.

People celebrate Vasant Panchami, a festival dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, usually in late January or early February. During this festival, people worship her by offering flowers, sweets, and by singing devotional songs. Students often place their books near her statue or picture to seek her blessings for success in their studies.

Goddess Saraswati teaches us that learning is a way to grow and improve ourselves. She encourages us to be curious, explore new ideas, and always seek knowledge with a pure heart.

MA LAKSHMI



The Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity:

In the ancient Hindu scriptures, Goddess Lakshmi is known as the goddess who brings wealth, prosperity, and good fortune. She helps people have what they need to live happily and comfortably.

Beautiful and Radiant:

The scriptures describe her as very beautiful and radiant, often seen wearing a bright, colorful sari. She shines with a golden glow, just like the sun that lights up the day.

Sitting on a Lotus Flower:

Goddess Lakshmi is often shown sitting on a lotus flower. The lotus symbolizes purity and beauty. Even though she is in a beautiful place, she is always calm and graceful.

Four Hands with Special Gifts:

In many pictures and stories, she has four hands. Each hand holds something special: one hand holds a lotus flower (symbolizing purity and spiritual knowledge), another holds a pot of gold (symbolizing wealth), a third hand often gives blessings, and the fourth hand is usually shown in a gesture of protection and guidance.

Loves Cleanliness and Order:

According to the scriptures, Goddess Lakshmi loves clean and tidy places. Keeping our homes and surroundings clean is believed to make her happy and attract her blessings.

Wife of Lord Vishnu:

In the scriptures, Goddess Lakshmi is the wife of Lord Vishnu, one of the most important gods in Hinduism who is known for protecting the universe.

The Story of Goddess Lakshmi: The Churning of the Ocean (Samudra Manthan)

A long time ago, Devas and Asuras were in a fierce struggle. They both desired the nectar of immortality, known as Amrita, which was hidden deep within the Ocean of Milk (Kshir Sagar). To obtain it, they decided to work together to churn the ocean using Mount Mandara as the churning rod and the serpent Vasuki as the rope.

The gods and demons used the serpent Vasuki as a rope and wrapped it around Mount Mandara. They then started to churn the ocean by pulling the serpent back and forth. As they churned, the ocean began to produce various wonderful and terrifying things.

After much effort, the ocean began to yield many treasures. Among these treasures was Goddess Lakshmi, who emerged from the ocean, radiant and beautiful, seated on a lotus flower. She was adorned with jewels and had a serene, graceful presence.

Goddess Lakshmi was the embodiment of wealth, prosperity, and good fortune. Seeing her divine form, Devas were overjoyed. Goddess Lakshmi offered her blessings to the Devas, promising to bring prosperity and success

to those who honored and worshiped her. She chose to reside with Bhagwan Vishnu.

Along with Goddess Lakshmi, the churning of the ocean also brought forth other treasures like the Nectar of Immortality (Amrita), which was shared among the Devas. The demons, having been tricked by Vishnu, did not receive the nectar and lost their chance at immortality.

Goddess Lakshmi's emergence from the ocean highlighted her role as the goddess who sustains and blesses the universe. She is not only the goddess of wealth but also the embodiment of beauty, purity, and grace. Her presence signifies abundance and the positive aspects of life.

The story of Goddess Lakshmi is particularly remembered during the festival of Diwali. During this festival, people clean their homes, light lamps, and celebrate her arrival with joy and devotion, hoping to invite her blessings for prosperity and happiness in their lives.

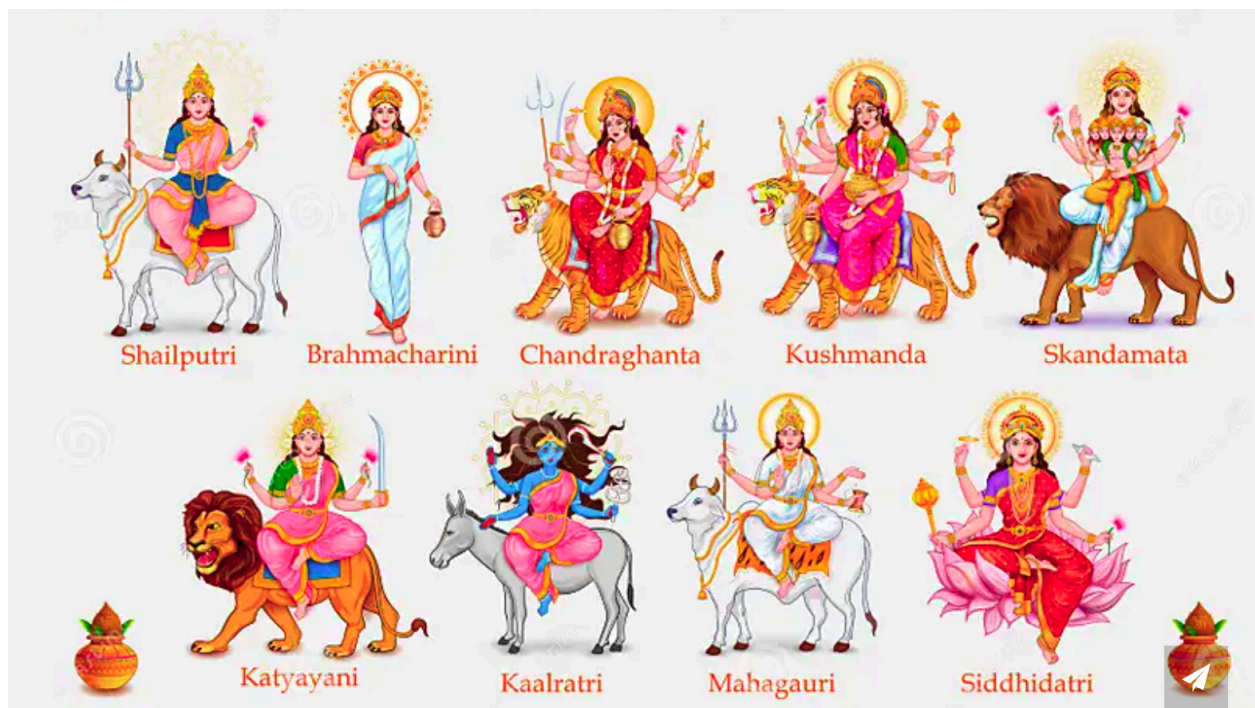


What is Sharad Navratri?

Sharad Navratri is a vibrant festival lasting 9 nights where people celebrate and honor Goddess Durga in her various forms. It's a time for worship, dancing, singing, feasting, and coming together with family and friends. The festival is both spiritually meaningful and full of fun activities, culminating in the joyous celebration of Dussehra.

Sharad Navratri is a special festival in Hinduism that lasts for 9 nights. It's a time of celebration, prayer, and joy, where people honor and worship Goddess Durga and her various forms.

Navadurga: The Nine Forms of Goddess Durga



First Night (Pratipada): Goddess Shailputri

Goddess Shailputri is the daughter of the mountains (Shaila) and is also known as Parvati. She represents purity and the divine energy of nature. She is depicted riding a bull and holding a trident (trishul) and a lotus flower.

Second Night (Dwitiya): Goddess Brahmacharini

Goddess Brahmacharini represents devotion, penance, and austerity. She is known for her unwavering dedication to Bhagwan Shiv. She is shown walking barefoot and holding a water pot (kamandalu) and a rosary (japa mala).

Third Night (Tritiya): Goddess Chandraghanta

Goddess Chandraghanta symbolizes bravery and is known for her fierce form. She is associated with protection and courage. She is depicted with a crescent moon (chandra) on her forehead and has a bell (ghanta) in her hand. She rides a tiger.

Fourth Night (Chaturthi): Goddess Kushmanda

Goddess Kushmanda is considered the creator of the universe. Her name means "cosmic egg" or "the one who created the universe." She has eight arms and is often shown riding a tiger, holding various divine symbols like a trident and a bowl of nectar.

Fifth Night (Panchami): Goddess Skandamata

Goddess Skandamata is the mother of Lord Skanda (Kartikeya). She represents motherly love and protection. She is depicted holding her son, Skanda, in her lap, and she rides a lion.

Sixth Night (Shashti): Goddess Katyayani

Goddess Katyayani is a warrior goddess who symbolizes strength and courage. She is known for her fierce and protective nature. She is shown with a lion and multiple arms, holding various weapons.

Seventh Night (Saptami): Goddess Kalaratri

Goddess Kalaratri is the fierce form of Durga, known for destroying ignorance and darkness. She represents the power to overcome evil. She is depicted with a dark complexion and is shown with a fierce expression, often riding a donkey and holding a sword.

Eighth Night (Ashtami): Goddess Mahagauri

Goddess Mahagauri symbolizes purity and peace. She is known for her radiant and serene form. She is depicted with a fair complexion and rides a bull. She holds a drum and a trident.

Ninth Night (Navami): Goddess Siddhidhatri

Goddess Siddhidhatri is the form of Durga that grants spiritual and material achievements. She represents the ultimate attainment and fulfillment. She is often shown seated on a lotus, with four hands, holding a discus, a conch shell, a lotus, and a mace.

This festival takes place in the autumn season, usually in September or October. It's a time when the weather is pleasant, and people enjoy the cool breeze and colorful decorations.

Some people fast during the festival, which means they might eat only certain foods or avoid eating certain things. Others prepare and enjoy delicious foods and sweets as part of the celebration.

During Sharad Navratri, people enjoy dancing and singing in groups. One popular dance is called Garba, where people dance in a circle to the beat of traditional music. It's a fun way to celebrate and show devotion.

Homes and temples are beautifully decorated with colorful lights, flowers, and images of the goddess. The decorations help create a festive atmosphere and add to the joy of the festival.

Vijaya Dashami, also known as Dussehra, is a major Hindu festival celebrated on the tenth day of Navratri. It marks the victory of good over evil. Here's a kid-friendly version of the story behind Vijaya Dashami:

The Story of Vijaya Dashami (Dussehra)

A long, long time ago, in a land called Lanka, there was a powerful demon king named Ravana. He was very strong and had ten heads, which made him seem even more fearsome. (According to Hindu scriptures, Ravana's ten heads symbolize his immense power, knowledge, and vices.) Ravana was full of Ego and used his powers negatively. He forcefully took Sita Ma, the wife of the Bhagwan Rama and kept her as captive in his kingdom against her will. To rescue Ma Sita and teach a lesson to Ravana, Bhagwan Ram gathered an army of monkeys and bears, led by his devotee Hanuman, and set out to fight Ravana.

After a long and intense battle, Bhagwan Ram defeated Ravana. He rescued Sita and returned to his kingdom with her. This victory was celebrated because it showed that good always triumphs over evil. Bhagwan Ram's bravery and righteousness were rewarded, and peace was restored.

To remember this great victory, people celebrate Vijaya Dashami or Dussehra. They light huge bonfires to symbolize the burning of Ravana's effigies. This symbolizes the end of evil and the triumph of good. There are also many fairs, dances, and plays called Ramleela that reenact the story of Rama and Ravana.

The story of Vijaya Dashami teaches us that no matter how big or powerful evil seems, it can be overcome with courage, honesty, and righteousness. Rama's victory reminds us to always stand up for what is right and to be brave in the face of challenges.

Deepavali/ Diwali

After rescuing Ma Sita, Bhagwan Ram, Ma Sita, and Lakshmana returned to their kingdom of Ayodhya. The people of Ayodhya were overjoyed to see their beloved Ram and Ma Sita coming back home. They wanted to celebrate their return with great happiness.

To welcome Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana back to Ayodhya, the people decorated their homes and the city with **thousands of lamps and candles**. They lit these lamps to symbolize the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. This was the beginning of what we now celebrate as **Deepavali/Diwali**.

On Deepavali/Diwali, families clean and decorate their homes with lights and colorful rangoli patterns. They prepare and share sweets and snacks with family and friends. There are fireworks and festive activities that bring joy and excitement.

Deepavali/Diwali is known as the **Festival of Lights** because it symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. It's a time to celebrate new beginnings and to spread joy and happiness.

Day-1 Dhanteras

The first day of Diwali is known as Dhanteras, which marks the beginning of the festival. It is a day dedicated to honoring **Dhanvantari**, the god of medicine, and **Lakshmi**, the goddess of wealth. People clean their homes and purchase new items, especially metal objects like gold or silver, as it is believed to bring prosperity.

Day-2 Naraka Chaturdashi (Choti Diwali)

The second day, also called Choti Diwali, commemorates Lord Krishna's victory over the demon Narakasura. People light lamps, burst firecrackers, and prepare festive sweets. It's also a day for personal and familial celebrations.

Day-3 Diwali (Deepavali)

The third day is the main festival of Diwali, which celebrates the return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya and the worship of Goddess Lakshmi.

Homes are decorated with oil lamps (diyas), rangoli (colorful floor designs), and lights. Families perform Lakshmi Puja to invite prosperity and wealth into their homes. Festive meals and sweets are prepared, and families exchange gifts.

Day-4 Govardhan Puja

The fourth day is celebrated as Govardhan Puja, honoring Lord Krishna's act of lifting the Govardhan Hill to protect the villagers from a storm.

Devotees create a small replica of the Govardhan Hill and offer food and prayers. It's also a day for preparing a grand feast.

Day-5 Bhai Dooj:

The fifth day of Diwali is Bhai Dooj, a festival celebrating the bond between brothers and sisters. Sisters perform a ritual for the well-being and success of their brothers, and brothers give gifts and promises of protection in return.

Diwali is a time for family gatherings, sharing joy, and making special memories. It's a festival where everyone comes together to celebrate and spread happiness.

What is Yog?

Rishi Patanjali is a central figure in the history of yog, and his work, the "Yog Sutras of Patanjali," is one of the most important texts in the classical yog tradition. Here's what Patanjali says about yoga:

1. Definition: Patanjali defines yoga as "Yog as chitta-vritti-nirodhah," which translates to "Yog is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind." This means that yog is about calming the mind and stopping it from being disturbed by thoughts and distractions.
2. Eight Limbs of Yoga (Ashtanga Yog): Patanjali outlines an eightfold path to achieving this mental state:
 - **Yama:** Ethical guidelines and moral disciplines (like non-violence and truthfulness).
 - **Niyama:** Personal observances (like cleanliness and contentment).
 - **Asana:** Physical postures that help prepare the body for meditation.
 - **Pranayama:** Breathing techniques to control the life force energy (prana) and calm the mind.
 - **Pratyahara:** Withdrawal of the senses from external objects to focus inward.
 - **Dharana:** Concentration or focus on a single point or object.
 - **Dhyana:** Meditation or sustained, uninterrupted focus on the object of meditation.
 - **Samadhi:** The state of blissful union and complete absorption with the object of meditation, leading to spiritual enlightenment.

The ultimate goal of Patanjali's Yog is Samadhi.

To summarize we can say that it is a practice that blends the body, mind, and spirit. It originates from ancient India and has been practiced for thousands of years.

In Hinduism, Yog is seen as a spiritual practice aimed at achieving a deeper connection with the divine and realizing one's true self.

Traditionally, following are various paths of Yog

- Karma Yog: The yoga of selfless action, where one performs their duties without attachment to the results.
- Bhakti Yog: The yoga of devotion and love for a personal deity, focusing on surrender and worship.
- Jnana Yog: The yoga of knowledge and wisdom, involving deep study and meditation to understand the nature of reality.
- Raja Yog: Often associated with meditation and the mental discipline of controlling the mind.

Why do Hindu's wear Tilak?

Hindus wear tilak as a mark of devotion, blessings, and cultural tradition. It signifies their connection to the divine, helps in focusing the mind on spiritual practices, and serves as a symbol of their religious identity.

The spot where the tilak is applied, usually between the eyebrows, is considered a **spiritual center** in the body known as the "**ajna chakra**" or "third eye." Applying a tilak here is believed to help focus the mind, enhance concentration, and deepen spiritual awareness.

There are various forms of tilak, each with its own meaning and purpose. For example:

- **Chandan Tilak:** Made from sandalwood paste, symbolizing purity and cooling.

- **Kumkum Tilak:** Made from red powder, often used in worship and festivals.
- **Vibhuti Tilak:** Made from sacred ash, representing detachment and purity.

Why do we tie Red/yellow thread on our wrist?

The red thread is a cultural symbol that plays a role in many traditional practices. It is often tied during important life events such as weddings, festivals, and religious rites. Wearing or tying a red thread is thought to bring good fortune and attract positive energies. The following mantra is chanted while tying the sacred thread.

येन बद्धो बली राजा दानवेन्द्रो महाबलः।

तेन त्वाम् अभिबध्नामि रक्षे मा चल मा चल॥

"Om yina baddho balee rajaa, daana veindro mahaa balah tena
tvaamahibadhnaami rakshe maachala maachala."

What is Sashtang Pranam?

Sashtang Pranam (or **Sashtang Namaskar**) is a traditional form of salutation in Hindu culture and practice, where one bows down in a specific manner that shows deep respect and humility. The term "Saashtang" comes from the Sanskrit words "Sa" (with) "Ashta" (eight) and "Anga" (limbs), which together mean "eight limbs" or "parts."

How to Perform Sashtang Pranam:

1. **Start Position:** Begin by standing straight with your hands joined in a prayer position (Namaste) in front of your chest.

2. **Bowing Down:** Gradually lower yourself to the floor, first by placing your knees, chest, and forehead on the ground. Your arms should be stretched forward or to the sides, depending on the tradition.
3. **Body Position:** In the final position:
 - **Knees:** Your knees should touch the ground.
 - **Chest:** Your chest should touch the ground.
 - **Forehead:** Your forehead should touch the ground.
 - **Hands:** Your hands may be placed on the floor in front of you, or you can keep them at your sides, depending on the practice or tradition.

Meaning and Purpose:

1. **Showing Respect:** Sashtang Pranam is a gesture of deep respect and humility. It's often used to honor elders, spiritual teachers (gurus), deities, or sacred places.
2. **Symbolism:** The eight points of contact with the ground symbolize the surrender of the ego and the recognition of the divine presence in everything. It is an act of acknowledging one's own smallness and the greatness of the divine or the person being honored.
3. **Spiritual Practice:** This form of bowing is often practiced in various spiritual and religious ceremonies, including prayers, rituals, and during meditation, to cultivate a sense of devotion and humility.

Why do we do Namaste?

Namaste is a gesture that embodies respect, recognition of the divine essence within each person, and a sense of connection. It's made of two words. Namah + Te. The divine in me bows to the divine in you. It's used in various contexts, from daily greetings to spiritual practices, and carries a message of humility and unity.

Why do we bow to elders?

Elders are often seen as repositories of wisdom, experience, and knowledge. Bowing is a way to show respect for their life experiences and the guidance they can offer. We bow to elders to seek their blessings and express our love and gratitude.

Why do Hindus draw designs on the floor?

Drawing designs on the floor is a common and meaningful practice in Hindu culture, and it encompasses a variety of rituals and traditions. Designs such as **Rangoli** (also known as **Kolam** or **Muggu** in different regions) and **Alpana** (Bengali tradition involving designs drawn with rice paste or flour) are often drawn at the entrance of homes or temples to welcome deities and invite positive energy. The intricate patterns are believed to create a sacred space that attracts divine blessings.

The act of drawing designs is often accompanied by rituals of purification. For instance, the area where the design is drawn might be cleaned and sanctified beforehand. The designs themselves are seen as a form of purification and protection for the home.

Creating these designs is considered a meditative and spiritual activity. It provides an opportunity for individuals to focus their mind and intentions on positive aspects of life and spiritual growth.

Why Hindu Gods have multiple arms?

Four arms represent the deity's omnipotence and ability to perform multiple functions simultaneously. It signifies that the deity has the power to control various aspects of the universe and fulfill different roles in the cosmic order.

The four arms symbolize the deity's supreme authority over the cosmos, indicating their capability to govern, create, preserve, and destroy.

Each arm of the deity often holds a different object or weapon, representing various aspects of their divine function and responsibilities. For example, Vishnu may hold a conch, discus, mace, and lotus, each symbolizing different powers and attributes.

Why do Hindus light a lamp? What are the suggested times to light a lamp in Hindu tradition?

Lighting a lamp, or Diya, is a significant ritual in Hindu tradition, symbolizing the removal of darkness and the illumination of knowledge, purity, and auspiciousness.

Hindus light lamps early morning before the sunrise and at dusk before the sunset. Many Hindus light a lamp during their daily worship or puja rituals at home or in temples. This act is part of the offerings to deities and symbolizes the presence of divine light.

Certain rituals and ceremonies, such as Aarti (a devotional song or hymn offered to deities with a lighted lamp), involve lighting lamps as an integral part of the worship.

My Notes:

