HINDU KIDS

HINDU SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Connecticut Valley Hindu Temple Society, Middletown, CT

September 2015 – May 2016

Lord Vishnu in Ananda Sayanam

Discover Your Heritage, Your History and Your Hindu Faith

Visit our web page at: www.cvhts.org/HSS.htm

Santhakaram Bujakasayanam,Padmanabham Suresham.
Vishwadharam Gagana Sadhrusham,
Meghavarnam Subhangam.
Lakshmi Kantham Kamala Nayanam,
Yogibhir Dhyana gamyam.
Vande Vishnum Bava Bayaharam,
Sarva Lokaika Natham.

I adore Lord Vishnu
who is the embodiment of peace,
who lies on the Shesha serpent,
whose navel is the source of the Lotus of the Universe,
whose complexion is swarthy like the clouds,
whose body shines with heavenly beauty,
who is the beloved of Goddess Lakshmi,
whose eyes are like Lotus,
who is meditated upon by the yogis,
who is the remover of the fear of the
world-process, the cycle of birth and death.

Editors team: Sanjeet Rakwal, Ramanpreet (Lily) Singh, Badri Narayanan, Sandhya Kalamadi, Harikrishna Govindram, Premkumar Nagabandi, Raja Chakarvorty and Anantha Venkataramanan.

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HSS Graduates

HSS Teachers/Coordinators/common assembly

Education Committee Report

By: HSS Teachers

The 2015-2016 year has been very rewarding year at Hindu Sunday School (HSS).

Highlights of the year were:

- Welcomed 2 leaders in training (LIT) students, Kum. Rajani Subramanian and Kum. Jyotsna Karamdas to second year of student teachers in training program. Rajani taught Varaha class under guidance of Sri. Badri Narayan and Jyotsna taught Vamana class under guidance of Smt. Gayatri Agnihotram and Smt. Vidya Seshadri. Both of them were very dedicated and committed to teaching younger students.
- Welcomed new teacher, Smt. Anuradha Visweswaran to co-teach Rama class along with Smt. Ramya Subramanian.
- Welcomed Smt. Nutan Pawar as returning teacher to engage Leaders in training program students.
- Guest lecture by Prof. Lakshmi Tatikonda as well as by Sunday school students.

HSS thanks all the teachers for their dedication, enthusiasm and guidance to students and inspiring students and parents alike. As always students have worked hard for the graduation event under teacher's guidance for their parents and families. Thanks to all the parents who volunteered for each group to make the graduation event smooth and memorable for all.

This year HSS congratulates four graduating students who will be joining the Leaders in Training (LIT) group next school year. 2 LIT students will be participating in Student teachers in training program.

We are always reminding and encouraging parents to get involved in our committees and coordination of HSS events. HELP is needed in our class rooms with individual class projects and in need of parents who would like to teach occasionally or on a full-time basis for any of our classes.

Following are the list of special events that were held this school year:
'Diwali celebration' – '*Diyas*' made by students were lit by students and HSS families.

'Kalpavriksha tree' – Students decorated the tree with handmade Indian holiday ornaments.

'Colors of Holi' – HSS students, teachers and parents enjoyed playing with colors on each other.

'Prayer Walk' – An informative tour of temple sanctuary was conducted by LIT students.

'Community Service' – LIT students collected food items and donated to Amazing Grace, Middletown.

'Graduation' – Celebration of End of the School year 2014-2015.

We are looking forward to see all our students and their families for school year 2016-17.

Acknowledgements

The sincerest of thanks to the following for their kind donations:

- Sri. Vipul Kashyap — Donated books to HSS Library
- Kum. Anusha Singh — Raised funds for HSS during Jan 1 Anand Bazaar event at the temple
- Sri. Vikram Potdar — Provided adapter for PC
- Sri. Ashwin Bangalore — Raised $250 for HSS during Jan 1 Anand Bazaar event at the temple
- Smt. Sunitha Mahabaleshwara — Donated Copier Paper.

Our HSS Education committee comprised of the following teachers and parent coordinators for this year:

Matsya class:	**Smt. Priya Balasubramaniam** and **Smt. Aruna Chebbi**
Kurma class:	**Smt. Usha Srivel** and **Kum. Srikeerti Pingle**
Varaha class:	**Sri. Badri Narayanan** and **Kum. Rajani Subramanian**
Narasimha class:	**Smt. Asha Potdar**
Vamana class:	**Smt. Gayathri Agnihotram**, **Smt. Vidya Seshadri** and **Kum. Jyotsna Karamdas**
Rama class:	**Smt. Ramya Subramanian** and **Smt. Anuradha Visweswaran**
Krishna class:	**Sri. Prashant Satyamangalam** and **Smt. Sushma Sharma**
Leaders-in-training (LIT):	**Smt. Nutan Pawar**

HSS Coordinators for 2015-16

Education:	**Smt. Sunitha Mahabaleshwara**
Registration & Finance:	**Sri. Srinivas Bangalore**
Newsletter:	**Sri. Anantha Venkataramanan** and **Team**
Audio-Visual:	**Sri. Premkumar Nagabandi**, **Sri. Jeyakumar Subbharaj**, **Sri. Ramesh Subramanian** and **Sri. Raju Bangalore**
Library:	**Smt. Sanchita Maitra** and **Sri. Anantha Venkataramanan**
Yoga sessions:	**Sri. Ramesh Subramanian**, **Sri. Raju Bangalore** and **Sri. Ashwin Bangalore**
Bhajan group:	**Smt. Ramya Subramanian**

Registration Report

By: Srinivas Bangalore

The registration process for the year 2015-16 went smoothly. The Sunday school run by parent volunteers under Connecticut Valley Temple Society (CVHTS) still attracted a good number of new students especially in the spring semester, as always returning students and siblings of returning students were given priority over new students.

Sincere thanks to the parent volunteers who helped with the registration process.

Hindu Sunday School (HSS) will reopen in the month of September 2016. Please check the HSS website (http://sites.google.com/site/hssofct/home) or follow the Hindu Sunday School link through the temple website (CVHTS.org) for additional information. HSS calendar for the 2016-17 year will be published in summer 2016.

HSS Library Report

Coordinators: Sanchita Maitra & Anantha Venkataramanan

Kudos! To all the students who took part in the library process to develop individual knowledge on Hindu mythological and fiction stories. This year we continued adding donated books to the library and made sure the library is in operation as long as HSS is open. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who spent bunch of Sundays to clean-up the existing pile of books. Plan is to re-use these shelves to stock HSS books permanently. Novel ideas are welcome to make this a reality next year.

As always, Contributions in any way towards the addition of books will be much appreciated by HSS.

HSS Audio/Video Report

Coordinators: Premkumar Nagabandi, Jeyakumar Subbharaj, Ramesh Subramanian

Thanks much for those who have volunteered during the setup of Audio/Video every week for assembly sessions. This year we were able to use our audio video components for events like graduation, Kalpavriksha not to mention our weekly assembly sessions & individual grade video lectures/presentations in full swing. Wi-Fi was on most of the time although we have to reap more with this next semester/year.

We would like to thank CVHTS EC for helping us secure new equipment for Sunday school.

Matsya

Matsya class Teacher's Report
Priya Balsubramaniam and Aruna Chebbi

Like the Matsya avatar, we began the fall semester with a small group of kids. They always brought Big smile and Big curious minds to the class. The kids made their own **shloka/ prayer** book consisting of simple shlokas with meaning. We expect the kids to know them by heart when they graduate to the next level. Prayer calendars were given to the kids in order to encourage them to say the prayers every day and were rewarded with a surprise gift when they returned the completed prayer calendar.

Our little balaks and balikas learned about various Hindu Gods like Ganesha, Karthikeya, Krishna, Rama, Hanuman, the Hindu trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) and Goddesses like Saraswathi, Lakshmi and Durga. Importance of Hindu festivals like Diwali, Pongal, Navaratri, Shivrathri, Holi etc. were discussed in the class, not to forget our kids all-time favorite "Dasavathar" series. Moral values were taught with a few stories from Panchatantra. Our lesson always accompanies a story related game or craft. Some of our favorite projects happen to be making Diwali posters, churning fresh butter and picture frame of Gods. Kids really look forward to making these curriculum related crafts, followed by a snack thoughtfully provided by one of the parents every week.

A very big 'thank you" to all the parents who hand out in every possible way right from bringing the kids to the class every week, helping with the crafts, volunteering to bring in the snacks, helping the class focus etc.

Can't wait to see our little Matsya's perform in the upcoming graduation event and we wish them lots of good luck.

Here is what they said about their **favorite God/Goddesses**.

Matsya

Matsya

I like Lord Vishnu. He protects us. I like Him when He is a lion.
Avik Patel

I like Lord Vishnu because He protects everyone.
Saket Karthik

I like Vishnuji and I like all of His 10 avatars. My favorite avatar is Narasimha because He is a lion.
Ranbir Puri

I like Krishnaji because He is really a beautiful God and He is an avatar of Lord Vishnu.
Pranav Ojha

My favorite God is Krishna. He has a flute and likes to eat butter.
Diya AnilKumar

Matsya

I love Ganesha. Parvathi made Him. Shiva (His father) cut Ganesha's head. Parvathi was mad. Shiva put Elephant head on Ganesha. Parvathi and Ganesha were happy.
Roopika Kurup

I like Mahadev and Ganapathi Bappa because they give gifts.
Ahan Karnik

Shiva is my favorite God. He destroys the bad guys. He wears a snake on His neck. I like looking at His moon. I like going to His Pooja at the temple because it makes me happy, relaxed and sleep well.
Kisa Thomas-Emanuelson

I like Goddess Durga because she is a girl like me and strong.
Nia Sharma

Matsya

Honoring Students-In-Training (SIT)

Thanks a bunch
&
Congrats !!

Why we start with Spice and end with Sweets?

Our ancestors have stressed on the fact that our meals should be started off with something spicy and sweet dishes should be taken towards the end. The significance of this eating practice is that while spicy things activate the digestive juices and acids and ensure that the digestion process goes on smoothly and efficiently, sweets or carbohydrates pulls down the digestive process. Hence, sweets were always recommended to be taken as a last item.

Kurma Class Wrap Up

By Usha Srivel and SriKeerti Pingle

It's been a wonderful year at HSS. Our Kurma class this year consisted of many students new to HSS and some who were here last year in the Matsya class. Joining me again this year in teaching was Sri Keerti Pingle. With the size of the class, she's been a big help and we were very fortunate to have her.

This year, I decided to change the curriculum for the Kurma Class. We wanted to give the class a good introduction to all the gods and goddesses in Hinduism. We started the year learning about Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and moved on from there. In addition to learning about Gods and Goddesses, I read some Panchatantra stories. These often have good moral lessons.

Depending on time, we often ended class with a craft or coloring sheet. This group of students thoroughly enjoyed craft time. Very special thanks to Spoorthi's mom, Sandhya Kalamadi, for her help throughout the year with crafts. Sri Keerti and I often needed her extra hands to assist with gluing and cutting!

The students also learned about and participated in school wide festivals throughout the year. For Diwali, we colored Rangoli sheets, made paper lanterns, and participated in Dandiya Ras. At Christmastime, we made colorful ornaments for the school tree. And for Holi, we tie dyed tee shirts.

We are very lucky to have Sunday school on the temple premises. We took a field trip upstairs to the Temple when we learned about the Navagrahas and we also had the opportunity to go on a Prayer Walk with the LIT students. This was a great opportunity to cement all of the learning we have done this year.

We will conclude the year with our Graduation Day celebrations.

This group has really been a pleasure to work with. We've seen them really grow. When the year began they were quiet and shy. Now they are eager to participate and have many questions. They're so curious and always give us a good laugh! We hope they will continue with Sunday school next year.

We would like to extend our thanks to the parents for your interest in Sunday school education for your children. We'd also like to congratulate you for nurturing their children's curiosity by exposing them to movies, books and the Temple. It really does make a difference with their learning.

We've asked our Kurma students to write about their favorite God or Goddess. Here is what they have written. We have a poem written by Ameya Patel. Enjoy

The Sun and Moon Outside of My Window

The sun and moon outside of my window will always be there.
It's just I know the sun and moon do not always show up.
The moon is to brighten the night.
The sun is to lighten the day.
The sun and moon are there to keep the earth awake.

Ganapati

By Ameya Tanvi Patel

I like Ganapati Da Da. I like Ganapati Da Da because he removes all obstacles from our way. Ganapati Da Da can be helpful. I'm so glad Ganapati Da Da is a god.

Vishnu

By Vivaan Patel

My favorite god is Vishnu. I like Vishnu because he can form into ten different gods like Krishna, Rama and Kurma. They are called avatars. Each avatar is Vishnu. He has a chakra and a Gatha.

Shiva

By Nikhil Vijayakumar

I like Shiva because he drank the poison and saved the Devas.	

Vishnu

By Spoorthi Bachu

My favorite god is Vishnu because he has many Avatars. I also like Vishnu because he's our protector god and I like things that protect me. He came to the world in the form of ten Avatars when evil came to destroy things. He protected all the people and the world from destroyers. Helping people is a good thing to do. That is why I like Vishnu.	

Krishna

By Anish Rudravajhala

My favorite God is Krishna. He looks very beautiful. I like him because he is blue (my favorite) in color. He has peacock feathers. He takes care of cows. He plays the flute. He saved his family from the demon Kamsa. He taught Arjuna the Geetha.

Ganesha

By Ayati Singh

My favorite God is Ganesha because he helps us. He solves our problems. He is very smart at doing Math. He has an elephant head. He is a son of Mata Parvathi and Shiva. I pray to Lord Ganesha every day.

Ganapathi

By Harshitha Subramanian

Ganapathi has one brother name Murugan. Ganapathi has 101 names. Ganapathi is a smart boy with knowledge. Ganapathi's dad's name is Shiva and his mom's name is Parvathi.

Ganapathi's favorite food is ladoos. Ganapathi removes all obstacles from our way forever.

Ganapati

By Mihika Joshi

My favorite Bapa is Ganapati Bapa. He makes happiness. I love to be in a good mood. He is the God of Knowledge. He makes us smart.

Krishna

By Samarvir Rakwal

My favorite God is Krishna. Krishna has three peacock feathers when he has his gold armor on. Krishna is one of the best gods ever. Krishna has a lot of friends and one of his friends is cows. Krishna lives in heaven. Did you know when it was raining Krishna lifted up a mountain? Krishna killed a demon snake when his friends didn't know it was a cave. Krishna killed a demon Tornado. Krishna had a demon uncle so he killed him. Krishna is always happy. Krishna stole butter.

About Front Page

Srirangam is the foremost of the eight self-manifested shrines (Swayam Vyakta Kshetras) of Lord Vishnu . It is also considered the first, foremost and the most important of the 108 main Vishnu temples (Divyadesams). This temple is also known as Thiruvaranga Tirupati, Periyakoil, Bhoologa Vaikundam, and Bhogamandabam. The temple is enormous in size with the complex being 156 acres in extent. It has seven prakaras or enclosures. These enclosures are formed by thick and huge rampart walls which run round the sanctum. There are 21 magnificent towers in all prakaras providing a unique sight to any visitor. It lies on an islet formed by the twin rivers Cauvery and Coleroon.

The temple boasts an historic past of great kingdom and a civilization thousands of years old. The reign of the Pallavas was marked by the creation of a solid religious foundation & appears to have contributed to the growth of Aryan institutions in Southern India more particularly in the Carnatic. Cholas reigned for about three hundred years over the Coromandel Coast and the greater part of Eastern Deccan, where they helped an advanced Hindu Culture to flourish. The cholas were defeated in the thirteen century by the Pandyas of Madurai and Hoysalas of Mysore. Hoysalas had taken particular interest in the building of the Temple of Srirangam, leaving behind both the inscriptions and buildings.

This temple is the only one in India with seven enclosures, a sacred symbolic number which represents either the seven centers of Yoga, or a reference to the seven elements making up the human body, in the center of which dwells the soul.

Varaha Class

2nd Grade – Varaha Class - Teacher's Note

We had a very enthusiastic class this year. Students were always eager to learn with a lot of zeal and excitement. They were asking questions and participating actively in the class. Rajani on the LIT teamed up to help with the classes and it is always a pleasure to have her helping in the class to guide the children.

We started the fall semester with the introduction to all **Gods and Goddess**. Then we covered **Festivals of India** in detail. After this we learnt the story of **Hanuman**. We also discussed the stories of **Lord Sri Krishna** in detail. I did my own Quiz questions that were intended to recap the contents learnt in each class so that the students are able to recollect and assimilate what they learnt, as they put their answers in writing. The children really enjoyed doing the quiz questions. We could see the mood of keenness among students when they start working on the answers to the Quiz questions!

The feedback that came across from the parents meeting this year - was the request to teach the children 1 Shloka or Ashtakam each semester. I took this feedback seriously and taught the children **Balamukundastakam** on Lord Krishna in the fall semester. The children enjoyed learning the Ashtakam on little Krishna. We discussed the meaning of each of the shlokas in the class. The children appreciated lord Krishna every time we recited the shlokas in the class.

In the spring semester – we did the story of Prahalada and Narasimha. Then we did the story of Dhruva. We covered the stories on Sons of Shiva – Ganesha, Ayyappa and Karthikeya.

Students were requested to work on the **Temples of India Poster Project** with help from their parents. The Project is about creating a poster about their favorite Temple in India that should include the **history of the temple**, **deities at the temple**, and **interesting facts** about the temple and why they like that particular temple. Students initially presented their poster in the class, later at the common hour sessions in front of everyone. The students really did a great job with their presentations! In the common hour, we got a lot of participation and questions from everyone, which made the presentations very interactive and informative. These projects completed by the students are presented in this Newsletter article. The Project work helped to instill a sense of appreciation for temples in India. The class presentations also boosted children's self-confidence.

Also in the spring semester, the students learnt the "**Mahalakshmi Ashtakam**" on goddess Mahalakshmi with the meaning of the Slokas. Students found learning "Mahalakshmi Ashtakam" to be easier than Balamukundastakam. For graduation students will be presenting the 2 Ashtakams that they learned in the fall and spring semester.

I truly enjoyed teaching the children and all the time I spent with them. It was a lot of fun together!! I want to sincerely all the parents, Hindu school teachers & coordinators including Rajani and Sunitha Ji for all their help and support to make this year possible.

Badri J Narayanan

Varaha Class

Anirudh Nagabandi - Mantralayam Raghavendra Swamy Temple, Andhra Pradesh

Mantralayam Raghavendra Swamy Temple is located in Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh, India. It lies on the banks of the Tungabhadra river on the border with neighboring Karnataka state.

Raghavendra Swamy entered alive into Jeeva Samadhi (tomb), also called **Brundavan**. The main shrine has large hall with inner sanctum housing Brundavan of Guru Raghavendra.

The Manchalamma's shrine is located on the left of the main mutt. Devotees offer prayers to **Manchalamma** first, before they enter Sri Raghavendra Swamiji's mutt to get his blessings.

The Temple was impacted by floods in **2009**. It was later reconstructed.

Poojay Raghavendraya Satya Dharma Radhayacha
Bhajatham Kalapvrikshaya Namdham Kamadenave

Pictures of Mantralayam Raghavendra Swamy Temple

Varaha Class

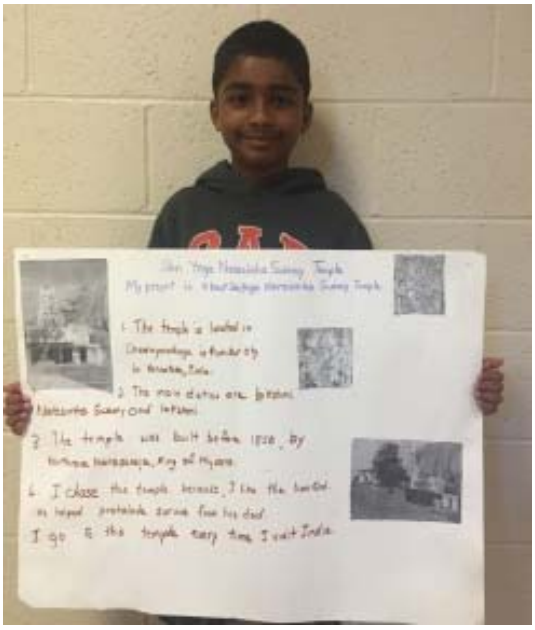
Tanush Raju - Yoga Narasimha Swamy Temple – Devarayanadurga, Tumkur City, Karnataka

1. The Temple is located in DevarayanaDurga in Tumkur City in Karnataka, India. Yoga Narasimha is perched at the top of the hill. The place is a favorite with both pilgrims as well as mountain climbers. The hills with lush green trees on all sides make the climbing a lot enjoyable.

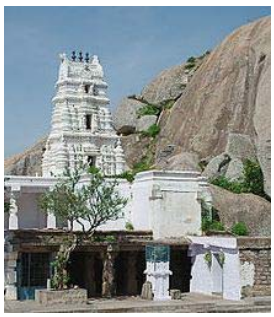
2. The main Deities are Lakshmi Narasimha and Lakshmi.

3. The Temple was built before 1858, by Karthirava Narasaraja, King of Mysore

4. I like this temple because I like lion god. He helped Prahalada survive from his dad. I go to this beautiful temple with my family every time I visit India

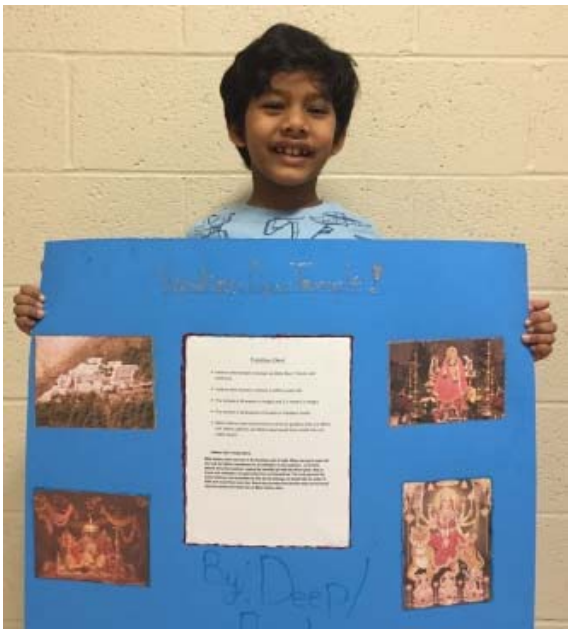


Pictures of Yoga Narasimha Swamy Temple



Varaha Class

Arnab Chakravarty – Vaishno Devi Temple, Trikuta Mountains, Jammu and Kashmir.



Vaishno Devi Temple, Trikuta Mountains, Jammu and Kashmir.

Vaishno Devi Temple is known as Mata Rani, Trikuta and Vaishnavi. Vaishno Devi Temple is almost 1 million years old. The Temple is 30 meters in length and 1.5 meters in height.

Temple is dedicated to Parvathi or Goddess Shakti. Mata Vaishno Devi took the form of three Goddess, that are - Maha Kali, Maha Lakshmi and Maha Saraswathi. All united into one single power.

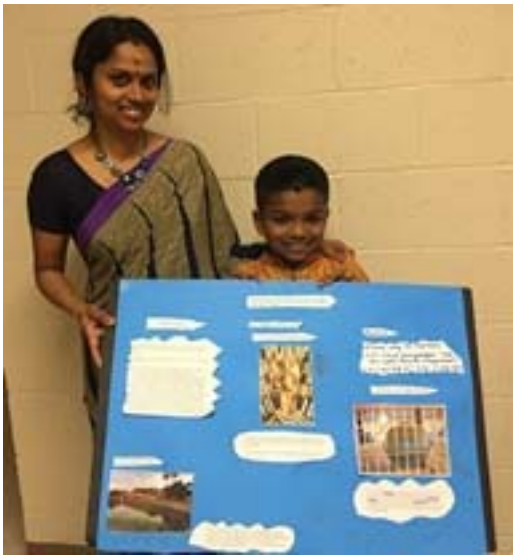
The Holy Cave of the Mother is situated at an altitude of 5200 ft. The Yatris have to undertake a 12 km trek from the base camp at Katra. At the culmination of their pilgrimage, the yatris are blessed with the Darshans of the Mother Goddess inside the Sanctum Sanctorum - the Holy Cave.

Vaishno Devi Temple Story: Mata Vaishno Devi was Born is southern part of India. When she was 9 years old she took her father's permission to do meditation on the seashore. Lord Rama passed along the seashore, seeing the beautiful girl with divine glow, deep in prayer and meditation. Rama approached her and blessed her. Lord gave her the name Vaishnavi and promised her that during Kaliyuga, he would take an avatar of Kalki and would then marry her. Rama promised that the entire world will sing her praises and worship her as Mata Vaishno Devi

Pictures of Vaishno Devi Temple

Varaha Class

Niranjan Rajesh – Ambalappuzha Sri Krishna Temple, Kerala, India



Ambalappuzha Sri Krishna Temple located in Ambalappuzha, Alapuzha district in Kerala.

History of the temple – Muslim ruler Tipu sultan wanted to convert Hindus to Muslims and he invaded Guruvayoorappan Temple in 1790. He could not find the main statue and continued to search for 9 years in vain. After Tipu Sultan died in 1799, it was revealed that Guruvayoorappan idol was kept safely at the Ambalappuzha Sri Krishna Temple. After Tipu Sultan's death this Guruvayoorappan idol was moved back to Guruvayoor. A new statue was placed in the sanctum

Usual portrayal of Lord Krishna in most temples is a playful, childlike appearance. In this temple however, Krishna is portrayed as a wartime chariot rider. The conch on his left hand to indicate the commencement of war.

Behind the temple is a gigantic pond, with well-constructed walls around it. This water is used for Hindu rituals and for the unique dance play called - "Kulathil Vela".

Mizhavu is a percussion instrument over 2 feet tall used to invent the art form Ottamthullal.

Pictures of Ambalappuzha Sri Krishna Temple

Varaha Class

Aditi Narayanan - Meenakshi Amman Temple, Madurai, Tamil Nadu

Meenakshi Amman Temple is located in Madurai, Tamil Nadu. I selected this temple because Madurai, (also popularly called the Temple City) is the hometown of my father. My grandparents live in Madurai and I visit the temple when I go to Madurai.

History of the temple – The temple is built in 6th century BC and the temple is about 2,500 years old.

The Temple is large with the size of about 45 Acres. The Temple has 4 Entrances in 4 directions – East, West, North and South.

The temple totally has about 14 towers, also called “Gopurams” in Tamil. Each Gopuram is beautifully sculptured in stone with figures of Gods, animals and demons. The Temples tallest tower is the southern tower which is 170 feet of about 52 meters.

Meenakshi and Sundareswarar are the main deities of the temple. There are 2 gold towers constructed on top of the sanctum of main deities.

The temple has a big pond with lotus flowers. The temple has long and wide corridors. There is a big hall with about 1000 pillars, which is also called the “Meenakshi Nayakar Mandapam”.

Pictures of the magnificent Meenakshi Amman Temple

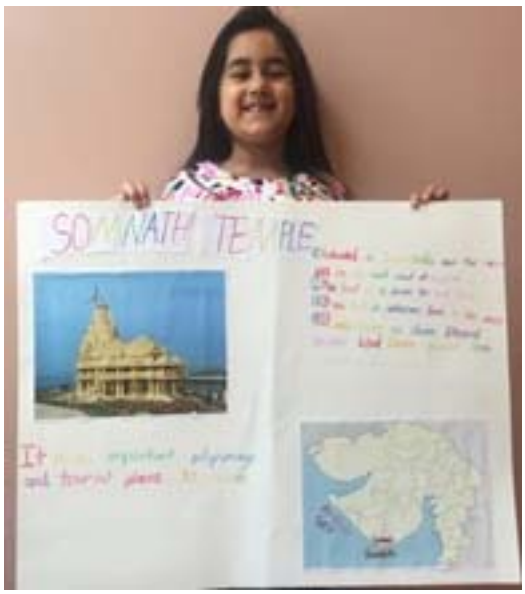
Varaha Class

Veda Sharma – Somnath Temple, Gujarat

The Somnath temple located in Prabhas Patan near Veraval in Saurashtra on the western coast of Gujarat.

The temple is first among the twelve Jyotirlinga shrines of Shiva.

The present temple is built in the Chalukya style of temple architecture and reflects the skill of the Sompura Salats, one of Gujarat's master masons. The temple's śikhara, or main spire, is 15 meters in height, and it has an 8.2-metre tall flag pole at the top.



Pictures of Somnath Temple

Narasimha Class

Teacher's Summary

By Asha Potdar

Namaste!

I had the pleasure of teaching a wonderful group of kids this year. The year started out with learning about the concept of the one God in Hinduism and the use of symbolic deities to represent important characteristics and aspects of reverence. We then discussed all other important symbols in Hinduism and their significance. The children learned about the commonly used Puja Ritual rituals and customs like why we light a deep, or burn a dhoop, to the meaning of Namaskara and Pradakshina among other things. One of the main items the kids got to discuss was the Hindu Values and Duties. The children discussed the life of Mahatma Gandhi and correlated the Hindu values he practiced in all his actions to what we studied earlier.

All through the year the class learned about the various festivals that were celebrated since the start of the school year like Navaratri and the significance and forms of Shakti, Vijayadasami, Diwali and the significance of the five days and Goddess Lakshmi, Tulasi Vivaha pooja, Dhanurmasa, Makar Sankranti and Vasant Panchami with the focus on Goddess Saraswathi. As we reviewed these festivals I have looked to maintain the focus on Trinity of the Goddesses and the focus on Shakti or Devi. The class also rigorously practiced the elaborate Devi Stotram, "Ya Devi Sarva Bhooteshu" and we recited it in front of the school during the Common Assembly. We also learned new shlokas for the Morning Prayers, Lighting the Lamp, and the shloka on the Bhagavat Gita.

In each session the class learned about the various Hindu mythological characters and real-life Indian heroes and their stories. Some of the stories were on Bali Chakravarti, King Bharat, Lord Ayyappa, & Goddess Durga.

Thank you all!

Narasimha Class

Light

By Sameer Salani Bathija

Light or Dharma guides you from the darkness and uncertainty of the shadows. Light leads you to do good things and helps you to live a good, clean healthy life. Never let darkness take control of your life and always let light show you the way to positive thinking and happiness. Light helps you to always do the right thing when interacting with others. It helps you to resist the temptation to follow the bad habits of others who engage in dark activities like lying, stealing, cheating, gossiping or bullying. We always have the ability to decide to choose the well-lit path of good or the dark shadows of evil. Do the right thing and trust the light within yourself to show you the right way to live.

By Anwita Govindaram

Once, there was a girl named Sati. Sati was a goddess. She was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. She always worshipped him. She was in love with him. She badly wanted to marry him. Her father Daksha did not approve of her thoughts. Daksha thought he was more supreme than Shiva. Then, one day Sati met Shiva she told Shiva her thoughts and asked if she could marry him Shiva answered yes. Sati married Shiva against Daksha's wishes.

A couple of days after their marriage, Daksha held a sacrifice and invited all the Devas, Gods and Goddesses including Brahma, Vishnu, Indra, etc. But, to humiliate Shiva he did not invite him. When Sati heard of this she became furious. Sati went to the sacrifice anyway as Daksha was her father even though Shiva told her not to go. Daksha was insulting Shiva in the sacrifice even though Shiva was not present. Sati got even more furious than she already was. She threw herself into the fire. She prayed for her reincarnation. She was reborn as Parvathi goddess of Shakti. Shiva got very angry at this and he burned the whole of the universe and stopped himself only at the request of Vishnu and Brahma, though his anger did not dissipate. Parvathi married Shiva as he had recognized her as reincarnation of Sati.

Narasimha Class

By Haasya Jeyakumar

Light represents knowledge, goodness, and good. Light takes away the darkness and badness and puts goodness and light. Light is in lamps, lightbulbs, fire and many more. To get light we can turn on a lightbulb or use fire to light a candle. You mostly use light and celebrate light during Diwali. We light Diyas in Diwali in the night. We light them in the night because it is dark at night, so when we light them the darkness goes away. We use light in Hindu Poojas when we pray to God. We also use light in aarthi. This is why light is so important to the Hindus.

By Nidhi Bhat

Are you wondering what Light is? Then you are in the right place! A few examples of where we see light… a candle, the Sun, in lightbulbs our homes. Light removes the evil, the dark and badness. Light is helpful. For example, without light you will not have a lighted house; or without the light from the moon, you would not find your way in the night outside. We use light in Hindu Poojas. A Pooja is when you pray to the Gods and Goddesses and get their blessing. Light is also use in the Hindu festival of Diwali. Light is lit in Diyas which is a small lamp. During Diwali, light represents goodness because the moment the Diya is lit; the darkness disappears, even with very little light. Now that you know what light is you can answer someone's questions on light!

By Pragyan Ojha

The light represents the presence of the Almighty. It gives life, destroys evil and makes the whole universe function properly. It is the purest form of energy, which also represents Soul, which, when it meets the body, makes it alive. Light is hope, light is energy, light is love and light is the answer. Light also symbolizes knowledge. Knowledge is everlasting wealth that is capable of removing ignorance just as the light removes darkness. An oil lamp symbolizes our vaasanas or vices and the cotton wick our ego. When lit it, it symbolizes the burning our vices and removing our ego.

Traditionally, the lighting of the lamp is part of the Pooja ritual and worship like lighting the lamp for Agni, placing water for Jala, burning incense stick for Vayu, using sandal paste, bhasma and vermillion for Prithvi and deep meditation prayer for Aakasha.

It is a tradition to light a lamp first before starting any auspicious Hindu events or rituals. Light symbolizes the absence of darkness, grief and unhappiness. The Almighty's divine grace is spread all over the house by lighting the lamps. God's first and foremost appearance is in the form of light which we all call "Divya Jothi" or "Divine Light". It also brings auspiciousness, prosperity, good health, abundance of wealth, and the destruction of ignorance.

Narasimha Class

By Raima Maitra

The light is what makes us live, because the light grows plants, and plants give us the food we need to live. The light is a symbol of knowledge, kindness, and god. The light always fights the darkness; without light, the world could not live, and the humans would not survive. The light is also the knowledge that defeats ignorance. This is why we need the light in our lives. Traditionally, Hindus do not celebrate or pray without light, and we always light the candle before our prayers.

By Shrikar Mutalik

Light indicated knowledge. Light brings you closer to knowledge. Gods and wise people are represented as having a halo over their head. Darkness is represented by lack of knowledge. Light removes darkness and that is why we put Deepa in front of God so we can see him clearly. That is why we do Aarti to God as we pray.

By Rishab

Light can be in many different forms, like Sun, candles, light bulbs. Light is used to make rooms bright to see. We see light every day. The Sun is the main source of light and because of that we are able to grow plants and from them we are able to live and get oxygen.

All Hindus celebrate a festival called Diwali, the festival of lights. People light diyas in front of God. Light is a symbol for knowledge and stands for good. Light destroys darkness, evil and ignorance.

About Front Page

The marvelous idol of Sree Padmanabhaswamy is seen reclined on the mighty five hooded serpent Anantha. The supreme God is in conscious cosmic slumber with the head positioned to the south and the feet to the north. Anantha (or the endless) spreads its hoods above the head of the Idol. The three coils represent the three characteristics of mankind Sattva, Rajas and Tamas and its five hoods indicate the Panchendriyas (five senses) or the five elements (Panchabhoota). From the navel of the Lord emerges a lotus on which Lord Brahma, the Creator, is seated. Just below the stretched right arm of the Lord is the Shiva Linga of the Destroyer. Brahma, Vishnu (Padmanabha) and Shiva represent the 'Srushti, Stithi and Samharam'.
The residing potency was drawn from the original Idol which was made of Iluppa wood and infused into the present Idol by certain complicated religious ritualistic processes. The Idol is made up of a highly complex amalgam termed Katusarkarayogam and contains within it 12008 Salagramas collected from the bed of the River Gandaki in Nepal. It is believed that Salagramas represent Lord Vishnu. Twelve Salagramas when worshipped together gain the potency of a Mahakshetram (Great Temple). Thus the mighty Ananthasayana Moorthy here gains the greatness and sanctity of a thousand Mahakshetrams.

Vamana Class

Teacher's Summary

By Gayathri Agnihotram and Vidya Rajagopalan

Our Vamana class consists of 9 curious and intelligent students, a very responsible volunteer LIT – Jyotsna and 2 teachers.

We have been reading and learning the Ramayana - Rajaji's writing on the same. We have been trying to assimilate his deep understanding of our scriptures. The book filled with little details and it is such finer aspects that our students also enjoy learning!

We have also brushed up on the importance and significance of our festivals as they went by during the year; beginning with Ganesh Chaturthi, followed by Navaratri, Deepavali, Pongal/Sankranti, Shiva Ratri and Holi. We used interesting colorful craft activities and had fun while celebrating!

We have also been learning the RamaRaksha Stotra – which literally protects or shields us from negativities!

We hope to conclude the year with a skit based on Ramayana. We can certainly say that we have had a fulfilling year filled with good learning and understanding and enjoyable times.

What was the reason for Rama's birth?

By Akhil Potdar

King Dasharatha and his wives did not have any children to be the next kings for his kingdom. So he prayed and was soon blessed with some prasada which he gave to his wives so that they are blessed with children. Soon Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata & Shatrughna were born.

Rama was the eldest son. Lord Vishnu had taken the form of Rama (avatar) in order to defeat evil on earth.

One of the evils who needed to be destroyed was Raavana, the king of Lanka.

In the Ramayana, Rama, in the end, fights with Raavana to get back his wife Sita and defeats and kills him.

How was Ahalya Cleansed of Her Sin?

By Abhirami Srivel

Sage Gautama has a wife named Ahalya. One day when he wasn't at the aashrama, Indra came.

He loved Ahalya so he pretended to be Gautama. When Ahalya realized it wasn't her husband, she told him to go. Gautama came and cursed Indra. He would lose his manhood.

He also cursed Ahalya so that no one would be able to see her until the son of King Dasharatha came and stepped onto the aashrama.

When the time came, Sage Vishwamitra told Rama to go free Ahalya. So when he went to the aashrama, she was freed. Then Sage Gautama had his wife back from the curse.

Why sit on the floor and have food?

This tradition is not just about sitting on floor and having food, it is about sitting in the "Sukhasan" position. Sukhasan is the position we normally use for Yoga aasanas. When you sit on the floor, you usually sit cross legged – Half padmaasana (half lotus), which are poses that instantly bring a sense of calm and help in digestion, it is believed to automatically trigger the signals to your brain to prepare the stomach for digestion.

Who is Viswamithra? How did he become a Brahmarishi?

By Paramvir Singh Rakwal

Viswamithra was held in awe by all as the most powerful among rishis. Viswamithra was a king who attained sainthood through terrible austerities. He had a fight with Vashishta. He had a fight because Viswamitra wanted to take Vashishta cow. Viswamitra lost to Vashishta. After he lost he went to the Himalayas to do tapas to Lord Siva so he can claim every weapon so he can beat Vashista and give revenge to him instead of getting the cow again from him.

He lost to Vashishta again because Vashishta absorbed the weapons now he is left with no good weapons now he got beat again because he didn't really have any other option to beat the mighty Vashishta.

He thinks Lord Shiva has fooled him so that is why he went to Lord Brahma to do tapas. After he did his tapas he only got the status of a Raja Rishi and he wasn't happy because he got a lower status then a Brahma Rishi.

After thousands of years Lord Brahma gave him the status of Maharishi but Viswamithra was still not happy with his status chosen by Lord Brahma. So when he did his tapas this time he let everything out this time that he was thinking about in his mind and also about the world.

And after this tapas he has finally been given the status of Brahma Rishi by Lord Brahma and now he is really happy because he got what he wanted from Lord Brahma. When Vashishta remembers their fight he says to Viswamithra, "you have achieved the fruit of your great austerities. Indeed you are a Brahma Rishi, my brother."

This is the story of the great Viswamithra that was trying to be a Brahma Rishi.

What are Kaikeyi's wishes? How did king Dasaratha react after hearing her wishes?

By Satvik Agnihotram

It was time for Rama's coronation, and king Dasaratha wanted to share that happiness with the youngest queen Kaikeyi, after king Dasaratha realizes why Kaikeyi is in the inner chamber. Kaikeyi says that she wants to use the two wishes she got from king Dasaratha after saving him from the Sambara battle- field. Kaikeyi said that her wishes were "to make Bharatha king and to send Rama to the forest for 14 years."
King Dasaratha was shocked, stunned, terrorized, surprised, worried, and astonished after hearing Kaikeyi's wishes. He says that If "I lose Rama, I cannot live thereafter. Without water, without sunlight, I may live for a while, but never without Rama!" Kaikeyi was poisoned by Manthara's words, that's why she asked king Dasaratha these wicked wishes.

Why did Vishwamithra take Rama and Lakshmana to the Dandaka forest & Explain how they defeated the demons Mareecha and Subahu?

By Shrikar Anand Seshadri

Vishwamithra took Rama and Lakshmana to the forest because he needed some people to guard the ashram from the Rakshasas Mareecha and Subahu, and their army.

They would disturb the rishis during their penance and yaagas. They would throw blood, skulls and other gross things to douse the sacrificial fire that the rishis poured their offerings into.

I know that because in the book (Ramayana by Sri. Rajaji), it says, "Our troubles will end if you send with me Rama, the eldest of your warlike sons. Under my care, he will grow in princely stature. He will surely defeat those Rakshasas and his name will gather lusture.''

They defeated the demons because Lakshmana shot the Maanavastra at Mareecha which did not kill him, but it used so much force that it shot him 100 yojanas into the sea. Rama shot the Agneyaastra at Subahu which killed him on the spot. Then, they destroyed the Rakshasa armies that accompanied Mareecha and Subahu. Lastly, the reason the Rama avatar took place was not only to kill Ravana, but also to protect the Rishis by killing rakshasas.

What is King Janaka's proclamation to win Sita's hand?

By Ashish Kashyap

Janaka was the king of Mithila and a very dear friend to king Dasaratha. Such a dear friend that when king Dasaratha was going to do a yaaga for progeny he sent ministers to Mithila to invite king Janaka. Janaka was the very dear student of sage Yaajnavalkya. In the Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna cites Janaka as an illustrious example of the Karma Yogin.

Before Sita was found Mithila was suffering from drought and Janaka was going to plough the land to try and find water. As Janaka ploughed the land he saw a baby that was divinely beautiful since Janaka was childless he excepted Sita as a gift from the Earth goddess. After that Mithila thrived. Janaka's proclamation is that whoever can lift, string and shoot Rudra's bow would win Sita's hand.

The Story of Ganga

By Rahul Iyer

King Sagara launched sacrificial horse ceremony. But Indra managed to carry off the animal. When the king heard this, he sent out the sixty thousand sons of Sumati to go find it. They found the horse near Sage Kapila. They started to accuse him. Instantly they were reduced to ashes. The only way for the sixty thousand sons to rest in peace is if Ganga were brought down.

Bhageeratha was a descendent of King Sagara. He hoped he could bring Ganga down to earth. He wanted to do this so his ancestors can rest in peace. He performed tapas and Brahma appeared before him and asked what his wish was. Bhagreeta said that he wanted Ganga down. Brahma said that the earth cannot withstand the force, but Siva alone can. So Bhageeratha directed his prayers to Siva and he granted Bhageeratha wish.

Ganga began to descend down to earth. Ganga thought she would fall on Siva head and sweep him away to Paataala. But Siva decided to teach Ganga a lesson. The flood waters fell on his hair which was an infinite receptacle. Ganga tried, but not a drop of water could come out of Siva hair.

Bhageeratha did more tapas and Siva took pity on him and gently released the flood waters. The waters flowed into seven separate streams, one was followed Bhageeratha to Paataala. But, on her course Ganga damaged the platform of a rishi named Jahnu. The rishi sipped the river and Ganga disappeared again.

The devas and other rishis begged to forgive Ganga. The sage decided to relent and Ganga came out through his right ear. Now Ganga was Jaahnavi, Jahnu's daughter. No further mishap happened after that and Ganga reached Paataala through the ocean. After that Bhageeratha managed to bring peace to his ancestors.

That is the story of how Ganga came down to earth.

How did Rama win Sita's Hand?

By Vishruth Sathyamangalam

The way that Rama won Sita's hand was that there was Rudra's bow that you were to string to win her hand. The bow was wheeled in inside a decorative case. After taking permission from Sage Vishwamitra, he took the bow out of the case, and rested one end on his toe he strung it so hard, that the bow broke in half with the sound like a clap of thunder.

People were amazed at how he had done it because many strong people tried, even Raavana, but not one could even lift the bow much less string it.

Teacher's Report: HSS 6th Grade 2015-2016 Academic Year

Namaste!

Rama class has followed the Purna Vidya curriculum on Values. Sushmaji, who has been teaching this class for many years past, has always focused on the importance of universal values. This curriculum is well structured, even though it does not offer supporting stories from our *Puranas* and *Ithihasas.* We supplement the text with appropriate materials.

This group of students, as is typical of the age group, enjoys a good conversation. We have used a discussion style class to meet this need. We read the materials, and discuss the ideas presented therein. Most students are active participants and are eager to provide their opinions on the topic at hand. We have discussed Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya, Priya, Rta, and Hitha (all forms of truthfulness), and Saucha (Purity). Non-violence brought on lengthy discussions on vegetarianism and hurtfulness. The children enjoyed wrapping their heads around the different forms of truthfulness. We discussed the story of Dattatreya in the context of Purity. We hope to cover at least one more topic on values before we begin getting ready for graduation. The articles that the children have written are on a universal value of their choice – they have chosen to write a story from personal experience to explore this value, and have drawn an illustration to accompany their story!

We are excited to be able to participate in Kalpavruksha 2015/16. The children have chosen to perform the Indian National Anthem on instruments that they play in school. We have the keyboards, cello, violins, saxophone, and some percussion instruments.

Thank you, parents, for supporting us in our efforts at HSS. We appreciate the role you play in bringing Hindu culture to your children – from the simple things like bringing them to school regularly and on time, to modeling those universal values of kindness, respect, truthfulness, and charity. Thank you for sharing your children with us this year!

Ramya Subramanian & Anu Vishweswaran

An Excess of Pride

By: Aastha Kashyap

Too much pride is a bad thing!

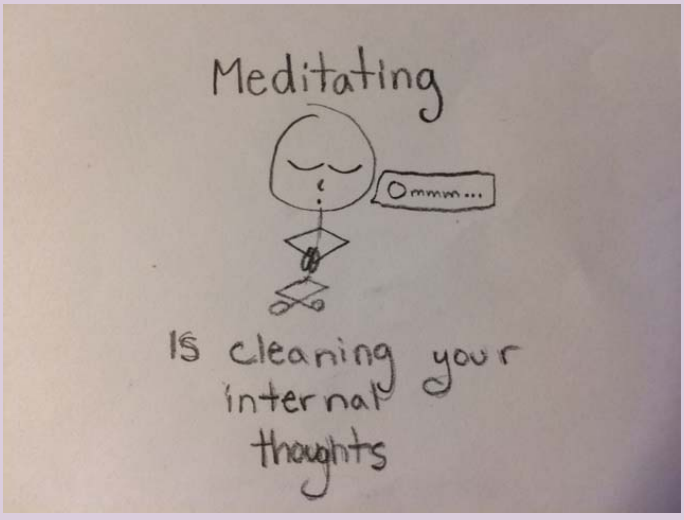
In the school that I go to, Gideon Welles School, there is a yearly play. This year, we preformed the play **Peter Pan.** There was a boy that was chosen for the role of one of the lost boys with lines. He ended up being too proud of the fact that he would get to say something onstage. He started becoming really bossy about it, as if he was better than everyone else. Yes, I know he had an accomplishment, but he was way too arrogant about it. He started insulting the other ensembles, teasing them about being less important. Eventually, the play came to a close, and he slowly lost his really prideful attitude.

In Sanskrit, the word *mada* translates to pride. *Mada* is an attitude of arrogance towards one's accomplishments. This is exactly how that boy was acting. Yes, he achieved something, but he shouldn't have scorned the accomplishments of others, just because he reached something more.

Hindu Values: Purity

By: Anusha Singh

"Purity is maintaining a pure and healthy body."



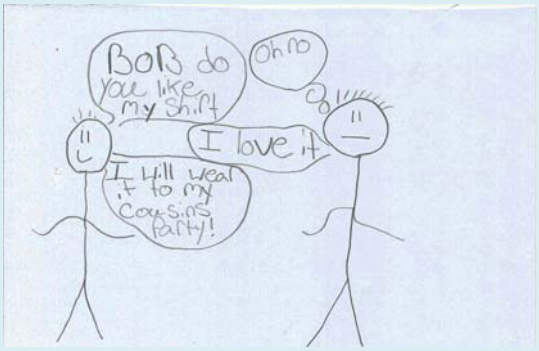
Saucha, which means purity in Sanskrit, is the act of practicing cleanliness in one or another's body. Not only on the outside (external), but also on the inside (internal).

You may be thinking, "Well, how exactly are you supposed to clean the inside of your body?!" But really there are many ways to do this. For example, to clean your thoughts, you can meditate. There are many things internally that you can act upon to keep pure, such as, your body, your soul, your thoughts, emotions, and your muscles. Calming down, is also an example of helping your mind, and soul entering a world of peace.

Purity is not only internal. There are many things you can do to keep you pure externally. Brushing your teeth, bathing, brushing your hair, and even going to the bathroom help you be pure. Many people do these things every day. So as you can see purity is very important. If you did not do these things regularly there would be a huge difference. Purity is as simple as bathing, so it is very necessary for people to do. That is what purity is.

Truthfulness

Bye: Caleb Freeman



I chose to write about Satya the cold hard truth and Priya telling someone a lie to make them feel better. It may seem that it would be better to tell someone Priya but that is not always the best choice.

For example if someone had a really ugly brown shirt and you said it looked good (Priya) they might take it to heart then wear it to something important like a wedding or birthday.

An example where Satya is better is if someone were doing something bad that they would get in trouble for like saying something or doing something bad. Thinking it makes them cooler and better. But, they would get in trouble for you would tell him that is not good (Satya) so that they would not get in trouble instead of telling them that they look really cool and they should do or dress this way all the time (Priya) because it would make them happy but then they would get in trouble.
One place where you could do either you want is if someone had a shirt that may be a little big but look good on them. You could say "it looks good" or you could say "get a different shirt" or it looks good on him.

These are all places where you could use Satya or Priya.

Truthfulness & Krodha (Anger)

By: Naveen Bangalore

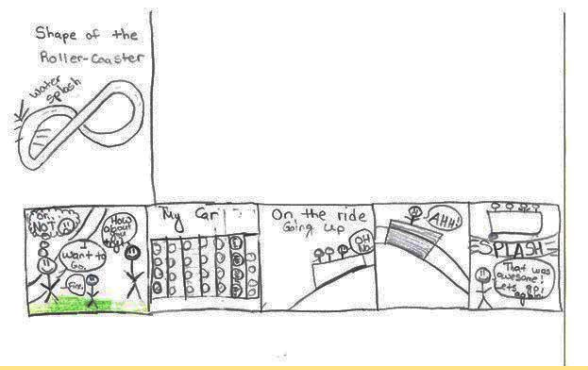
One day after lunch my teacher called me and 2 class mates out into the hallway. The reason was that 1 classmate made a schedule because both class mates wanted to sit with me at lunch but didn't get along. So we made a deal. The deal was that one day one class mate would sit with me and the next day another classmate would sit with me and they would alternate like that. But 2 days after the deal was made one class mate denied he ever said ok to the deal. But he knew what was coming to him but he stills did things that could get him in trouble. I'm thinking, "when he will learn?" But we did the right thing and told the teacher. Therefore he was not doing Satya, (which means the cold hard truth) or rta which means (doing the right thing). This story connects to Satya.

Truthfulness and Anger in the School Cafeteria

Another story is when I was in 5th grade my friend was accused of being a snitch which was a lie. That is what I think. It started out as a normal day then at recess my friend was told that he was accused of being a snitch. This went on during lunch but in the line the person that was accusing, started hitting my friends back into the wall. He kept on doing it even when he started crying. He continued to do it when told our teacher. After that I think he was in school suspension. Therefore he was unleashing his Krodha (anger) on him. He had a short temper.

Perseverance

By: Haritha Subramanian



Me getting encouraged to go on the roller-coaster at Hershey's Park

What is Perseverance?

Perseverance is an everyday value that will help you reach your goals. If you kept giving up, you would never be capable of completing anything challenging.

Why is it only a Hindu value? This shows that if you keep trying and trying until you get there, you will be able to try something new. The following is an example of perseverance from real life.

At Hershey park (Hershey, PA), I was standing in front of a giant water roller-coaster, nervous about getting on it. The rest of my family was already on it, except me, my sister, and my uncle. I even saw younger kids go on happily, and at the same time, I was encouraged to go on. My mind switched back and forth about this situation. If I don't go on, I would miss a good chance on an awesome roller-coaster. But, finally I pushed myself to at least try, so gathered up my courage and did it (with the help of my uncle). I held on tight, and I was gaining suspense until… "AHHHHHHHHH!" (What helped you gather up the courage?

"That was AWESOME!" I said to myself. So then I went on a couple times more. I am glad that I faced my fears with perseverance and made it through something I might actually like.

I will scan the sketch. Include a caption. Example: "How I persevered to overcome my fears at Hershey park" would be a good caption for your illustration.

Ahimsa

By: Dhivya Ganesh

What is Ahimsa?

The Sanskrit word Ahimsa means non injury. A human would not want to be physically or emotionally hurt by another human.

Non example of Ahimsa relating to me

In the fourth grade, I was bullied by a girl. She emotionally hurt me by saying cruel things about me such as saying I was ugly. She also spread rumors about me to all my friends. This made me very upset. I didn't know what to do so I thought to myself what would I do if my friend got bullied.

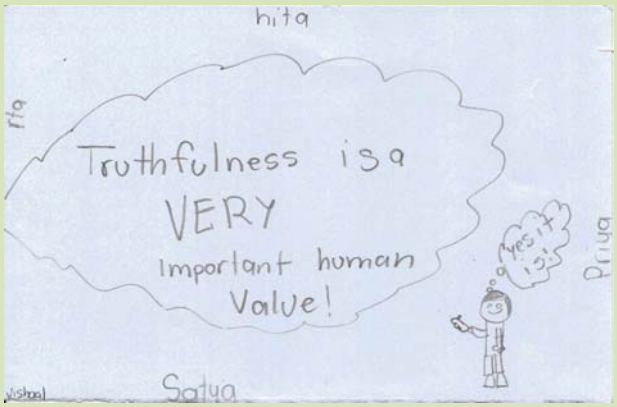
An idea popped into my head. I decided to go tell a teacher what's happening and maybe they could help. The very next day, I told my teacher what happened. When my bully found out, she got very angry and started crying. My teacher gave me a warning because she took my bully's side. I was very very upset. What should I do now? I told my friends what was going on between my bully and I and they helped me so much. Here's what happened: They made a group to stop the girl from bullying me by actually going up to her one day with a teacher and told her to stop bullying me. She got really mad but luckily the teacher was there. So from then on, she never bullied me.

Conclusion

Ahimsa is a human value that we should all follow. We don't want others or ourselves to get hurt emotionally or physically. Try putting yourself in others shoes. How would you feel if you got bullied? Always treat others the way you want to be treated so no one will get hurt.

Truthfulness

By: Vishaal Saatvik



There are 4 types of truth: Satya, Priya, Hita, and RTA. Satya is the absolute truth. For instance, say that your best friend is wearing a brown outfit you dislike; you may say his/her outfit is the color of dirt. Priya is truth that doesn't hurt anyone, it gives compliments. . "You're a phenomenal artist" is what you might say when you are actually thinking, this guy stinks! Hita is the truth you say for the good of others, "Please go to bed at 8:00, for tomorrow is your school graduation", while RTA is doing the right thing, going with dharma. Pretend you didn't do your given homework assignment, and the teacher is checking who did and didn't do it. When the teacher asks you if you have done your assignment, you tell the truth, instead of lying. I find that I practice Priya the most because I don't like hurting others' feelings. Truthfulness is a great human value which should be followed every day.

Truthfulness

By: Tara Salani-Bathija

My sixth grade year at Hindu Sunday school has been full of learning and improving our social skills. We have learned to be comfortable around or class and at the temple. We have learned about what features as a good character we should have and what features we shouldn't have. My essay is about truthfulness. Over the past few months, I have learned that truthfulness is one of the most important keys to life. There are two main parts to truthfulness, *Satya* and *Priya. Satya* is the absolute truth that someone would say even if it means insulting the person that you are talking to. *Priya* is when someone says something that they really just say to make the person happy. Both of these forms of truthfulness are very important, as long as you use them at the right time and place.

It is one of the first few weeks of school. I shook with fear as I entered a crowded room full of seventh, eight, and one or two sixth graders [including me]. This was the first day of Future Problem Solvers, North Branford Intermediate School's academic club. This club is based on science, language arts, math, and many more academics. This is my club. Later on, the club became minimized to about nine people. The first competition was coming up and our coach wanted to make sure that we all enjoyed the club. This is where truthfulness comes in. The ninth kid didn't seem very interested in what we were doing. He was always on his phone and didn't care about the six step process. The first competition was looming dangerously close. The coach was getting restless with the kid and knew he wasn't going to help us with the competition. Finally, the kid admitted that he really didn't like the club a day before the competition. This boy used *priya* by telling the coach that he loved the club even though he didn't. He should have used *Satya* even though it may hurt the coach. Because he used *Priya*, he could have jeopardized the whole team. Luckily, we were able to prepare the team and won the competition.

Many months later, we attended the state competition. We worked hard for two days and won second place. We are invited to go to the international competition in Lansing, Michigan in June. As I stared at our big trophy, I finally understood the difference between *Satya* and *Priya.*

RAMA - 6th Grade

Krishna Class

Teacher's Report

By Prashant Sathyamangalam

It's been a wonderful year at HSS. Our Krishna class this year consisted of many new students coming from grade 6/Rama class. It was great to see 12+ kids in the class.

This year, I was looking to teach more about the different personalities especially the religious personalities like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa but changed those to talk about various personalities of Mahabharata and how some incidents fit into our daily life. In addition we also spoke about swami Vivekananda. It was so great to have this group who are so involved in the class and the way they try to relate to these teachings/stories. These kids have a different perspective to these stories which I thought was amazing and wonderful. It shows how involved they were in these classes.

We did some interesting crafts for each occasion bringing their creativity and ideas out in the open.

I would personally like to spend more time but due to work commitments was not able to spend as much time as I wished. These students took all my absence in their stride and we're always looking forward to new learnings.

This group has really been a pleasure to work with. The thoughts and questions they bring makes it even more joyful to work with these kids.

I will make sure to spend more quality time with this class next year to graduate them in life and make them understand the essence of these religious teachings in their day to day life.

We would like to extend our thanks to the parents for your interest in Sunday school education for your children. We'd also like to congratulate you for nurturing their children's curiosity by exposing them to movies, books and the Temple. It really does make a difference with their learning.

Krishna Class

Shakuni in Mahabharata

By Shreya Anand Seshadri

A prince sat fuming in his palace, in no mood to listen to his parents' advice. All he could think about was the marriage of his sister to the blind prince of Hastinapur, Dhirtarashtra. The princess, Gandhari, had also decided to cover her eyes, and give up her vision; feeling as though she should not have what her husband does not. Her brother, Shakuni was enraged, that his sister had been forced to give up her happiness. He vowed to destroy the Kuru dynasty since it had tricked and cheated his beloved sister out of a life of comfort. Shakuni almost succeeded! Though he befriended Duryodhana (the eldest of Gandhari's sons) and poisoned his mind with hatred for the sons of Pandu (Dhirtarashtra's brother), Krishna came into play. Krishna aided The Pandavas in each decision, ensuring that Shakuni's wicked schemes would not succeed. For example, Jayadhrata (Dushchala's husband) had been the one to murder Abhimanyu, Arjuna's son. Arjuna then took an oath saying that if he didn't kill his son's assassin by sunset the next day, then Arjuna himself would jump into the fire and die. Shakuni hatched a plan to ensure the Pandava's death. He hid Jayadhrata in the camp, for from the battlefield where he would not be found. Without Krishna, the five Pandavas would have become four, but Mukunda covered the sun with his Sudharshana Chakra, making it seem as though the sun was setting. Jayadhrata fell for the simple trick and came to the battlefield so he could gloat in his enemy's face. But, the sun had not really set! Arjuna realized this and struck the Pashupatastra at Jayadhrata thus fulfilling his vow, and eliminating another dangerous enemy. Without Krishna's help, the Pandavas would not have been able to win the Kurukshetra war against Shakuni's crooked mind. In the end, Nakula slayed Shakuni, thus ending the reign of Adharma in the Dvapara Yuga.

Bhima in Mahabharata

By Himaya Jeyakumar

Bhima is one of the brothers of the Pandavas. He is known as the mighty one. There is this story where Bhima was caught by a python named Nahusha. Nahusha was squishing Bhima and Bhima felt like his strength was going away. The python was stronger than Bhima, which was very unlikely to happen because normally, Bhima is the strongest one. Later, Nahusha reveals as one of Bhima's ancestors who turned into a python for insulting a sage. The only way he could release from the curse to become a human again is when a person dispels all of Nahusha's doubts. Bhima thinks that he is not the person Nahusha is looking for. Later, Yudistra, one of Bhima's brothers, found Bhima wrapped up by the snake. Nahusha told Yudistra he would free his brother if he answered the serpent's questions. Yudishtra answers the questions well enough that they cleared Nahusha's spiritual doubts and broke him form the curse. Then, Nahusha freed Bhima and everyone was happy. This story taught me to never insult anyone or else there will be consequences. Also, this shows me that Bhima might think that he is the strongest, but there are still obstacles that he has to face. Bhima's characteristics relates to life because some people might think that no one or nothing will mess with them, but there will always be something at some point that will be in your way. These people won't be prepared for this because they didn't see an obstacle coming. Life is never simple.

Krishna Class

Dronacharya

By Ankith Nagabandi

Dronacharya was the teacher (or guru) of Pandavas. His name comes from being born in a vessel as a baby. Acharya in Sanskrit word means guru.

When Drona was young, he was accepted to be a companion to Drupada by the King of Panchala who was his father. He was a very clever boy and quickly mastered the Vedas and Vedangas and also mastered the skill of archery. His father, Rishi Bharadwaj and King Prishata sent both Drupada and Drona to do their studies with Rishi Agnivesha to learn and study the science of arms. During their time in the gurukul (means school), both of them became best friends. Student at the gurukul had to do some share of chores and had their studies. Since being the prince of a kingdom, Drona did some of Drupada's chores also. Drupada exclaimed sometimes that he would give half of his kingdom to Drona when he became king. Both of them successfully graduated from gurukul and headed back for their homes.

After graduating, Drupada became king when his father, Prishata died and Drona married sister of Kripa and had one son named Ashwatthama. Sadly, he and his family were very poor. Ashwatthama when he was young, hearing about milk from his friends, Ashwatthama wanted to taste it. His mother just mixed flour with some water and gave it to him because they couldn't afford to have any real milk. Ashwatthama thought it was milk and drank it without any complaints. Drona became sad, because he loved his wife and son; Drona decided to go and try to get some wealth. Hearing that Parasurama was giving away his wealth, Drona quickly went to him. He was too late but was offered weapons by him. Parashurama taught Drona how to use the weapons and finally Drona became a master at military art. He still didn't have any wealth and decided to go to his old friend Drupada because he said he would give some of his kingdom to Drona when they were in gurukul. When he arrived Drupada's kingdom, Drona was explaining memories of them being friends, Drupada didn't believe him and claimed that a beggar wouldn't be his friend, then sent him away. Drona decided to go to Hastinapur.

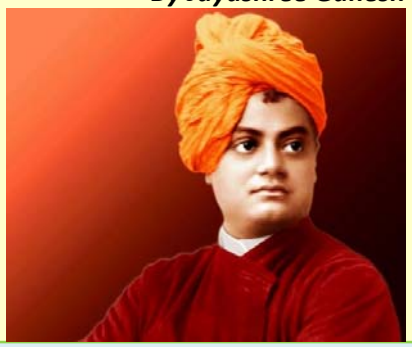
On the outskirts of the city he saw some boys playing ball and it had fallen into a very deep well. The boys were the students of Kripacharya, who were the Pandavas and Kauravas. They could see the ball, and Yudhistra's ring which also fell. They didn't know how to get it out. Suddenly, Drona came and pointed that they belonged to the clan of Bharat and asked them if they were skilled enough. Yudhisthira said that if Drona could get the ball and ring out, then he could come for a meal at their teachers house. So, Drona took a blade of grass and got the ball out. Using Arjuna's bow and arrow, he also took out Yudhistra's ring. All of the boys were curious who he was. He told the boys to ask Bheeshma about him. Bheeshma was happy and warmly welcomed him and told him to teach Kauravas and Pandavas.

Drona taught the boys how to use various weapons and the art of war. After their studies were completed, he told them to go and defeat Drupada. Duryodhana was the first one to step forward. He took Karna with him. Drupad was also very skilled and defeated Duryodhana. The Pandavas went next and Arjuna finally defeated and brought him to Drona all tied up. Drona explained that he was a good king and they used to be friends, and now he only has half the kingdom because they defeated Drupada. He was very mad and did a penance as he wanted a boy to kill Dronacharya. During the battle of Mahabharata, his son Dhrishtadyumna killed Dronacharya.

Krishna Class

Sri Swami Vivekananda

By Jayashree Ganesh



Narendra Datta also known as Swami Vivekananda was born on January 12, 1863. Narendra kept asking his questions to his teacher Sri Rama Krishna but teacher would never answer them because teacher wanted Narendra to find answer by himself. Suddenly, Sri Rama Krishna died of cancer and that's when Swami Vivekananda changed his name. Then when Swami Vivekananda was 30 years old he came to Chicago, and when he came he called all the people here his brothers and sisters of America and he was very fair.

The Meaning Of Swami Vivekananda's Speeches At The 1893 Chicago Conference

By Ronan McDermott

When Swami Vivekananda first came to the Chicago Conference, he was ragged-looking and dirty. The other religions' representatives looked down upon him as an old beggar, and were not prepared to take him seriously. However, when he started his speech, Swami Vivekananda said, "Sisters and Brothers of America, it fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us." First of all, this was a new introduction, with everybody being addressed as "sisters and brothers" in equal terms. Also the other representatives present hadn't shown any kindness to Swami Vivekananda, yet he overlooked this, and thanked them, and he addressed them kindly in his speech introduction. In Swami Vivekananda's speeches at the Chicago Conference, Swami Vivekananda explained to representatives of other religions the meaning of Hinduism, and how it was practiced. He explained that Hinduism was merely a mental concept, but important to be used in our everyday lives. Swami Vivekananda went on to say that we should create peace amongst one another, not war. We should not attempt to destroy other religions to save our own. He said that although we all come from different religions, we are still all humans, and that we should work together despite our differences. Swami Vivekananda further stated that he is proud to belong to a religion that shelters and assists others. For example, we did this when the Israelites' "holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny." Instead of pushing away the Israelites to face their own demise, we assisted them, and made sure they were okay. Swami Vivekananda emphasizes this point to say that other religions should do the same. In conclusion, Swami Vivekananda proudly claimed to the world that Hindus are proud to belong to Hinduism, and that Hinduism is a religion that respects all religions in the world.

Swami Vivekananda

By Neha Jonnakota

Swami Vivekananda was born in Kolkata on January 12th, 1863. Swami Vivekananda was born as Narendra Dutta but changed his name when he became enlightened... His guru was Sri Rama Krishna, Swami Vivekananda would ask him all sorts of questions that Sri Rama Krishna would not answer and would make Vivekananda answer himself. Vivekananda would use Krishna's words to prove that all religions can be united and that it's useless to fight against each other. When Swami Vivekananda went to the Parliament of Religions in Chicago 1893, he began his speech with the soon to be famous words "Sisters and Brothers of America" - at these words, Vivekananda received a two-minute standing ovation from a crowd of seven thousand. He never thought of different races and he thought of all as one. His speech made people realize that all religions are essentially united but we as worshippers make them seem different and isolated. He was praised by various critics like the New York Times for his point of view on various religions. Swami Vivekananda was a person that many all over the world looked up to because of his perspective on unity.

Krishna Class

Arjuna and Yudhisthira

By Anindita Charkavarthy

Arjuna: Arjuna meaning ("Shinning or famous like sliver") was the 3rd son of the Pandava brothers. He was married to Draupadi and Subhadra, they were Lord Krishna's sister, and he was also married to Ulupi and Chitrangada at different occasions. Arjuna had 4 sons named Srutakarma, Iravan, Babruvahana, and last but not least Abhimanyu. Arjuna was born into the royal family of Hastinapura. He was acknowledged as a son of Pandu by his first wife Kunti, though he was fathered by the grace of the god Indra. Arjuna was the third son, after Yudhishthira and Bhīma. Younger to him were the twin sons born of Pandu's second wife Madri, Nakula and Sahadeva.

Yudhishthira: meaning ("The one who is steady is war"), was the eldest son out of the Pandavas brothers. He was the king of the Indraprashta and later on Hastinapura. Kunti gave birth to Yudhishthira by invoking the Lord of judgement or also knows as Dharma (also known as Yama). Yudhishthira was the rightful heir to the throne, but this contest was tested by Dhritarashtra's son Duryodhana. Draupadi and Devika were wives of Yudhishthira and his children names were, Prativindya and Yaudheya.

Conflict between Yudhisthira and Arjuna

During the battle between Yudhishthira and Karna, Karna had Injured Yudhishthira very badly. He was taken to the tent by his two youngest brothers Nakul and Sedhev. Arjuna goes to the tent to visit his brother out of concern, but when Yudhishthira suspects that the only reason Arjuna is there is because he has killed Karna. Yudhishthira vents out all of his anger on Arjuna and also tells him to give up his Gandavi. The moment Arjuna heard his brother insult his sword Gandavi, Arjuna pulls the sword out and was ready to slay Yudhishthira until Krishna had entered the tent and asked a explanation on this weird behavior, Arjuna tells Krishna about his secret vow – The vow to kill anybody who insults his Gandavi. Since, vow should never be broken he insists that he will have to kill his own brother even if he doesn't wish to. Krishna's solution to this conflict was instead of killing Yudhishthira by his sword, Arjuna killed him by insulting Yudhishthira in order to keep his vow intact. However after a while, Arjuna felt bad that he insulted his brother. He then quickly took the sword out once again, only this time to behead his own head. Krishna stopped him from committing suicide and came up with another solution. He mentioned a way out of this problem, self-praising and boasting in public is a misdeed which is also same to one's own death. So, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna to praise about himself in public which would fulfill his desire to commit suicide, but also keep his vow intact.

Karna

By Abhinav Bachu

Karna is a very important character in the Mahabharata. He opposed the Pandavas and sided with the Kauravas.

Karna is one of the misfortunate throughout his life. Duryodhana named Karna as king of Anga to make Karna's status equal to Pandavas. To honor Duryodhana's friendship, he chooses to join Kauravas.

Karna was the son of Kunti. When Kunti was young, she was given a boon by Sage Durvasa, allowing her to have a baby whenever she wanted to. She wanted to find out whether it actually worked.

When she completed the mantra, Surya came to her and gave her the child, which was later known as Karna. Karna was born with earrings and armor. Kunti was astonished and told Surya that she just wanted to see if the boon actually worked. But Surya said that he could not take the baby back. Kunti finally had to put the baby in a basket and set him afloat on a river. He was later found by a charioteer, Adhiratha, chief charioteer of King Dhritarashtra of Hastinapur. Adhiratha and his wife decided to adopt the baby and named him Karna.

Karna had two curses and would haunt him later in the most important battle of his life. The first curse was from Parshurama. Karna wanted to advance his skill of archery even more and therefore went to Parshurama. Parshurama only taught to Brahmins, so Karna disguised himself as a Brahmin. One day, when Parshurama was sleeping on Karna's lap, a bee came and stung Karna. Karna, not wanting to wake up his teacher had to bear the pain and did not say a word. Parshurama eventually woke up because he felt blood oozing. When he woke up, he saw Karna bearing the pain and he told Karna that a Brahmin could not have done that. As Karna told Parshurama the truth, Parshurama cursed Karna saying that he would forget everything that Parshurama had taught him when he needed it the most. The second curse was from a Brahmin. One day, Karna was practicing his archery skills and accidentally shot a Brahmin's cow. The Brahmin got angry and cursed him that he would become helpless and die in the same way the innocent cow had become, by his chariot wheels getting stuck in the ground. All of these curses eventually occurred during the Kurukshetra War. Karna's chariot wheel was stuck to the ground. Arjuna comes along and aims his bow at Karna. Karna was unable to remember the mantra and was killed by Arjuna.

This impacts my life because it shows how you should always pick the side of good, and not the side of bad.

Krishna Class

What does Dharma mean?

By Monisha Raju

The dictionary definition of dharma is order, solidity, and normality. But dharma has a deeper meaning than that; it is about the way things are and the laws of nature. Dharma sustains the universe. It is a person's duty. In the era of the Vedas, dharma is an unchanging universal law. Observance of the universal law enables a person to be content and happy. It is the moral law combined with spiritual discipline that guides one's life. Dharma binds us and the world together in harmony. This influences the way people live and view themselves. Dharma shows that life is an obligatory duty and an opportunity to fulfill the aims of creation. Though dharma gives an experience of peace, joy, strength and tranquility, it changes depending on the social expectations.

Draupadi

By Akshata Nair

Draupadi is the daughter of Draupada. Draupadi emerged from a fire when her father was performing an important yagna. Draupadi was known as the beauty of dark complexion. Draupadi was also known as Yajnaseni, one born from fire. Draupadi was married to all five pandavas. Hence Draupadi was also known as Panchali. Panchali means one married to five. Draupadi was first married to Arjuna and after they were returning home from the wedding to greet their mother. As they approached the house Arjuna said to their mother, "look what I have brought mother." Their mother thought they brought food and said,"share it between each other." They obeyed their mother's wish and all five brothers married Draupadi. One day the Pandavas went to gamble with Kauravas. Yudhisthra, the eldest of the five brothers lost everything including Draupadi. The Kauravas wanted to humiliate Draupadi so Dushasana started to pull her sari. Draupadi prayed to lord Krishna for help. Suddenly Krishna granted her wish and gave her an endless sari. So eventually Dushasana stopped pulling the sari off Draupadi. Draupadi played a big role in the life of the pandavas and it is important that we all realize what she had done.

Leaders-in-Training (LIT)

Teacher Summary

By Nutan Pawar

Namaste.

In the academic year 2015-2016, the two students in LIT (Leadership In Training) – a small class – were introduced to the teachings in Bhagavad Gita. I used a question and answer format between a child and his grandmother to bring forth the essence of the Gita and the importance of doing one's duty always.

The LITs led the HSS common assembly in Surya Namaskar. We worked in class on the proper form to perform Tadaasana (the mountain pose) and Hasta Uttaasana (the raised arm pose) that are so vital to performing Surya Namaskar. The mountain pose prepares the body's muscles while Hasta Uttasana gets the core and the lungs ready to provide power to follow through with Surya Namaskar. The Mountain pose is often the first step in many complex aasanas and hence it is important that it be done correctly.

The LITs lead the Temple walk for grades KG through 3rd in the month of March/April. It was an educational experience for all. Students also helped with setting up of library and sometimes assisting in younger grades. This experience will help them to lead classes themselves in the future and that has been one of the goals of training the LIT – to get them ready to teach.

The LITs are also actively involved in collecting food donations, which benefits the Amazing Grace Food Pantry in Middletown. The pantry is committed to feeding the hungry and helping with other basic human needs. It also promotes the awareness of the impact of hunger and isolation in our society.

Both my students are in higher grades in school and I understand that the work load is quite challenging. I applaud their continued commitment to HSS and its teachings. I thank the parents, volunteers, teachers as well as the children for their dedication and enthusiasm for the Hindu way of life and for investing their Sundays towards this effort.

Thank you.

Ahimsa Vs. Dharma

By Srivani Agnihotram

The Bhagavad Gita is a very important piece of literature in the Hindu culture. It is a conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna that happened in the middle of the battlefield during the war in the Mahabharata. There are 18 chapters and 700 verses in the Gita, and each verse and chapter have significant meanings to them in terms of teaching a lesson.

One lesson that I thought was extremely crucial was deciding between Ahimsa and Dharma when they come into conflict. This lesson is discussed in Chapter 1 of the Gita. When Arjuna arrived at the battlefield, he was shocked to see that he was going to be fighting against his own relatives, the Kauravas. He didn't want to kill any of his relatives, but he was supposed to do the right thing and fight for the side he was on. With this conflict, Arjuna was extremely confused as of what to do and turned to Lord Krishna for advice (Gita Chapter 1 Verses 2630).

ahimsā paramo dharmah sarvaprāmabhrth smrtah
tasmāt prānabhrtah sarvān na himsyād brāhmanah
Kva
(Mahabharata)

Krishna tells Arjuna that the highest virtue of a man is sparing the life of others, even if that means telling a lie.

Lord Krishna tells Arjuna a story about a hermit known for his truthfulness. The story goes as follows:
One day, a hermit, who vowed to always tell the truth, faced a dilemma that involved his honesty. A robber was chasing a merchant to try to rob and kill him. The merchant ran to an area near the hermit's village to hide from the robber. The hermit saw the merchant in his hiding spot. The robber came to the hermit's house and, after paying his respects, asked if he had seen anyone running away. The hermit was now in a conflict. If he told the truth to the robber, then the robber will kill the merchant. If he told a lie, then he will break his vow and his reputation will be ruined.

The hermit made the wrong decision and told the truth to the robber. The robber was able to catch the merchant and kill him. Therefore, since the merchant was killed as a cause of the hermit telling the truth, the hermit also shares in the sin with the robber for helping a man meet his death. If the hermit told a lie, he could have saved the merchant's life and followed Ahimsa. When in conflict between Ahimsa and Dharma (Righteousness), Ahimsa, or nonviolence, should be the first priority when making a decision. Saving lives is a higher priority than saving one's reputation. That is the moral of Chapter 1 in the Bhagavad Gita. When in doubt, seek a knowledgeable person to help you decide what to do when Ahimsa and Dharma come into conflict.

The Path of Meditation

By Rose McDermott

There are several paths leading to God. One of these paths is called the path of meditation. This path connects the yogi to the god. The yogi, a pious and peaceful soul, is united with God. A yogi has complete control over his or her senses and mind. A yogi will see everything equally, whether it be a stone, an animal, or a plant. "The mind of a yogi remains calm even during the worst time" (Gita 6.19). There are several types of meditation, some of which are simple enough for children or younger adults. To have control over the mind is also another form of meditation. Some may say "master the mind, and you master the world"(Gita 6.19).

yathā dīpo nivātastho
neṅgate sopamā smṛtā
yogino yatacittasya
yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ

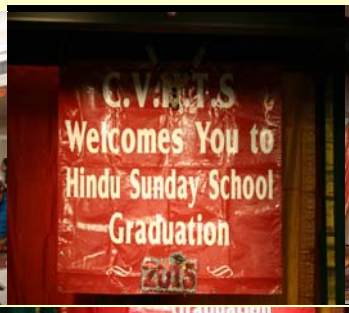
Yoga is a very simple method of meditation that all can follow. Before starting your day, meditate. Hold your waist, spine, chest, neck, and head straight, motionless, and steady. Think about your favorite god, or deity, and mentally chant OM for a set amount of time of your own choice.

There is, in fact, a story of a child in ancient India who got his wishes fulfilled by believing in the path of meditation. This is the story of Dhruva. Dhruva was the son of King Uttanapada and Queen Suniti. King Uttanapada was very fond of his second wife, Suruchi, who was very mean and cruel to Suniti and her son, Dhruva. One day, Dhruva wanted to sit on his father's lap, where his stepbrother was sitting. Suruchi dragged him aside and said, "if you want to sit on your father' lap, you should have been born to me. At least now, pray to Lord Vishnu, so that he will make this happen," So Dhruva took this advice seriously, and went to meditate with pure determination for six months. Vishnu appeared, and granted his wish. Afterwards, his meditation was successful, and he was soon crowned king. In the end, he reached the highest heavenly seat of the Polestar.

In conclusion, the path of meditation is a path that leads to God.

Why worship Tulsi plant?

Hindu religion has bestowed 'Tulsi', with the status of mother. Also known as 'Sacred or Holy Basil', Tulsi, has been recognized as a religious and spiritual devout in many parts of the world. The vedic sages knew the benefits of Tulsi and that is why they personified it as a Goddess and gave a clear message to the entire community that it needs to be taken care of by the people. We try to protect it because it is like Sanjeevani for the mankind. Tulsi has great medicinal properties. It is a remarkable antibiotic. Taking Tulsi every day in tea or otherwise increases immunity and help the drinker prevent diseases, stabilize his or her health condition, balance his or her body system and most important of all, prolong his or her life. Keeping Tulsi plant at home prevents insects and mosquitoes from entering the house. It is said that snakes do not dare to go near a Tulsi plant. Maybe that is why ancient people would grow lots of Tulsi near their houses.

Kalpavriksha HSS participation, Holi, Kalpavriskha tree decoration

Graduation 2015