

Dur Editors: Priyanka Mehta,
Shimona Agarwal, Kavya Rao,
Sejal Gupta, Shrey Thaker and
Ritvik Chilakamarthy



Om bhur bhuvah svah tat-savitur varenyam
bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah
prachodayat

Vasant Panchami - By Priyanka Mehta

Short Story with a Deep Meaning

A 24 year old boy seeing out
from the train's window
shouted...

"Dad, look the trees are going
behind!"

Dad smiled and a young
couple sitting nearby, looked
at the 24 year old's childish
behavior with pity. Suddenly
he again exclaimed...

"Dad, look the clouds are
running with us!"

The couple couldn't resist and
said to the old man...

"Why don't you take you son
to a good doctor?"

The old man smiled and said...

"I did and we are just coming
from the hospital, my son was
blind from birth, he just got his
eyes today."

*Every single person on the
planet has a story. Don't judge
people before you truly know
them. The truth might surprise
you.*

Vasant Panchami, also known as Saraswati Puja, Shree Panchami or the Basant Festival of Kites is a Hindu and Sikh festival where Goddess Saraswati is worshiped. She symbolizes wisdom, education and learning. It is celebrated January 24th and according to the Hindu calendar it is celebrated every year in the month of Magh. This festival is celebrated in Northern parts of India. People offer food to the Brahmins and set up prayers for Goddess Saraswati. The color yellow is the predominant color associated with the festival. Kite flying is also commonly associated with this festival. Both children and adults fly kites on this day to celebrate freedom and enjoyment. It is like their New Year where children start initiating studies and begin learning. (go to page 7 to see how we celebrated Vasant Panchami at GGKLI)

Holi - By Ritvik Chilakamarthy

Holi is a festival which celebrates the triumph of good over bad. This celebration connects everyone, no matter how rich or poor. Holi was originally known as Holika, and was said to exist several centuries before Jesus Christ. On the day before Holi, a bonfire is lit to burn an idol of the evil Holika. This starts the celebration. The next day, the main day of the festival is called Dheuleti. No prayers or ritual are set on this day. It's purely for fun. People hurl colors at each other on this day. Holi has significance in many aspects. The burning of Holika, and the god Krishna throwing color at girls are some mythological aspects. The power of truth is a cultural aspect. Holi brings everybody of any social class together, even if they're Hindu or not, since everybody likes to have fun in this festival. Surprisingly, Holi is also good for your health. In winter, everybody feels tired and lazy. Holi is a way to wake up the body. The color on your skin is said to keep it beautiful. The bonfire's heat also kills the bacteria on your body. In conclusion, Holi is a unique and fun festival.





Diwali – By Sejal Gupta

The most glorious time of the year for Indians start around mid-October through mid-November. One of the main celebrations that lasts for 5 days is Diwali! Diwali falls on a different day each year during the month October or November because of the lunar Hindu calendar. Diwali was formed by Hindus to remark the day that good won over evil. Diwali is celebrated by many Hindus who hope for a prosperous and healthy new year and who welcome good spirits into their homes.

GGKLI celebrated Diwali as well! Students learned about the history of Diwali. After this presentation, students took participated in a puja. In addition to these prayers, children in kindergarten and group 7 participated in some fun activities. Kindergarteners participated in making thalis with flowers and diyas. Students who are in grades 7 and above made rangoli patterns with colored powder. Students heard a story about Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and evil. It started when Rama, the prince, was forced by his own father to go to exile for 14 years. His brother, Lakshmana, and his wife, Sita, went along with him. Towards the end of his exile, Sita was captured by an evil demon by the name of Ravana. Rama and Lakshmana fought against Ravana and ended up killing Ravana to free Sita. After the 14 years ended, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita came back to find that everything was lighted up with diyas to celebrate their return back. This started Diwali.

In modern India, there are five days to celebrate Diwali, each having its own importance. On Day 1, most Hindu wives clean the house and go out shopping for valuable objects such as gold, kitchen utensils and any other metal object. This is the day to pray to Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. This is the day most businesses open. On Day 2, houses are decorated by family members with diyas and rangoli, patterns made on the floor using colorful powders. On Day 3, families get together for a big puja to honor Goddess Lakshmi. Families have a scrumptious dinner after this prayer. Day 4 is the first day of the New Year according Hindu lunar calendar. Day 4 symbolizes a fresh start. Friends, neighbors and relatives exchange gifts and good wishes for the New Year. On Day 5 also known as the last day of Diwali, brothers of married sisters go to meet their sisters. In return, the sisters prepare a big meal with lots of love for the New Year. Diwali is very important to many Hindu families.



They who give, have all things; they who withhold, have nothing. – Indian Proverb

Diwali Fun Facts:

- ❖ Also known as “Festival of Lights”
- ❖ Marks the Hindu New Year
- ❖ “Shubh Deepavali” is a customary greeting associated with Diwali, it literally translate to “Have an auspicious Diwali”

Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten. - Neil Gaiman

Navratri

By Kavya Rao



The celebration of Navratri is an annual festival that is celebrated by Indians around the globe. It is one of the greatest Hindu festivals which symbolizes the triumph of good over evil. There are many customs and traditions accustomed with it as well.

Navratri originated from before the Vedic Age and is mentioned in the Vedas. To protect the world from the atrocities of Mahishasura, the mighty demon, the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva united their powers and created a divine female warrior, known as Goddess Durga. Mahishasura saw the divine beauty of Goddess Durga, got mesmerized, and wanted to win over her. The battle continued for 9 nights and at the end of the ninth night, Goddess Durga beheaded Mahishasura. The nine nights came to be known as Navratri, while the tenth day was called Vijayadashmi, the day that brought the triumph of good over evil. Navratri also originated from Lord Rama. Lord Rama worshipped Goddess Durga in nine aspects, for nine days, in order to gather the strength and power to kill Ravana. Those nine nights became to be known as Navratri and the tenth day, on which Lord Rama killed Ravana, came to be called Vijayadashmi or Dusshera, signifying Rama's (good) triumph over Ravana (evil).

Navratri is celebrated every year for about 9-10 days beginning on Ashvin Shukla Prathama and ending on Ashvin Shukla Navami. The festival is usually between September and October. The date of the celebration changes and depends on the lunar calendar. During the nine days of Navratri, the nine forms of Shakti are worshipped.

Navratri is celebrated across India in different ways. In Gujarat, devotees fast for 9 days and worship the idols of the goddess. The women observing the fast bring an earthen pot home, with holes, and light it every evening and perform aarti. The pot is called Garbi and the light resembles Shakti or power. The people of Bengal celebrate Navratri as Durga Puja. During this time, women and girls are dressed in gorgeous saris and men in kurtas. Life size idols are put up and maha aarti is performed every evening. In southern India, navratri is celebrated a little differently. During this time, people invite friends and family over to look at the Kolu, which is an exhibition of dolls, figurines, and idols. Goddesses Lakshmi, Durga, and Saraswati are worshipped for three days each. Gifts of coconuts, sweets, and clothing are exchanged. People often buy and wear new clothing during these days. Women and girls wear nine different colors during the nine days of Navratri. They may wear saris, churidars, chaniya choli, etc.

Navratri is mainly celebrated to worship the goddess Durga. She is the embodiment of Devi, or the supreme goddess. The form of the goddess Durga is said to symbolise creative energy and the feminine body. This form of the goddess has nine aspects. Navratri therefore is dedicated to the worship of these aspects. Each form or aspect of the goddess has its own day dedicated to it.



Gandhi Jayanti

By Shrey Thaker

The celebration of a person is marked down in history to commemorate any great deeds such man may have done on his time on Earth. Some people, however, are more renowned for marvelous reform they have accomplished in the world. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of India, is one of the most remembered civil rights leaders in history. His impact has presented itself in the nation of India, and has had an everlasting effect on all nations worldwide. Mahatma Gandhi was born on what we now know as International Non-Violence Day, October 2nd. Every year, for 15 years now, a non-profit organization known as the Shanti Fund, hosts a wonderful celebration, including many acts and performances of many young and talented people from different communities. This year's theme was "Youth for Peace".



The event is celebrating Gandhi Jayanti (the birth anniversary of Gandhiji). This year is Gandhiji's 145th birthday. Coinciding with the fact that Gandhiji dedicated his life to nonviolence, countless performances were produced in honor of Gandhiji and what he did to impact our world. Throughout the duration of the event, the audience experienced the gestures and dances of a handicapped group (visually challenged and hearing impaired) from India. They performed Gandhiji's Daily Prayer Songs and a traditional dance. The fact that they were visually challenged is inspiring to many young children. The dancers danced to the prayer song, which group portrayed self-connection, acceptance, and tolerance. All of the dances performed remembered Gandhiji's message in which the event passes on to the community.

Additionally, during the event Dr. Panna Shah explains about Shanti Fund and its goals. She introduces different activities that the Shanti Fund offers. Dr. Shah states, "Since 1999, volunteers of Shanti Fund have embarked on a project to promote peace and nonviolence within the children of Long Island."

Last but not least, the extraordinary performances of Soh Young Lee-Segredo and her team. Soh Young Lee is a singer who promotes Korean independence and unity. Her team expressed the achievements of great leaders of the world. Soh Young Lee's performances were a mix of duets, solos, and interactive audience pieces. Works such as *Let There Be Peace on Earth* and *This Little Light of Mine* are works of art which touched the hearts of the audience through their participation.

The Gandhi Jayanti celebration is a huge festival not only celebrating Gandhiji's birthday, however it is saluting all who follow his teachings and express to the community what they feel will make the world a better place. All of the performers that performed are dedicated to the message, and the message will be passed on, as long as the youth are for peace.



You Must Be the Change You Wish To See In the World - Gandhiji

A Baker's Dozen of Interesting Facts about India:

by Shimona Agarwal

- 1) India has the second largest population in the world, with over 1.2 billion people
- 2) India has more population than the entire Western Hemisphere of Earth.
- 3) India is the largest democracy in the world.
- 4) The Taj Mahal (a famous mausoleum and popular tourist attraction that has also been named one of the seven wonders) is located in the region of Agra.
- 5) India became an independent nation in 1947 after ending British rule that began in 1858.
- 6) The national symbol of India is the endangered Bengal Tiger. Although this tiger is a common species in Asia, it is now an endangered one and there are only about 2,000 left in the world.
- 7) The most popular sport in India is cricket, with the Indian team being the first to win the Cricket World Cup in 2011.
- 8) 100 million people come to India's Kumbh Mela Festival, the world's biggest gathering of humans. In it Hindus from all over the world come to bathe in a sacred river.
- 9) The world's biggest family lives together in India: a man with 39 wives and 94 children.
- 10) India has the world's lowest meat consumption per person.
- 11) 70% of all the world's spices come from India.
- 12) India is the birthplaces of chess.
- 13) On the Indian flag represents: the color saffron stands for courage and sacrifice, white for truth and peace, and green for faith, fertility, and chivalry. A symbol of a wheel spinning used to be in the center of the white band, but when India gained independence, a Buddhist *dharma chakra*, or wheel of life, replaced the spinning wheel.



Why Do We Get Dreams? – By Priyanka Mehta

Everyone in the middle of the night gets dreams. The real picture is that we all live in two different worlds. We live in a world where we are awake and we live in a world where we are asleep. Dreams can be either good, bad, scary and strange. In our dreams we experience a different world. Dreams can be from the past or even show the future.

When we are asleep a whole new world is brought to our attention. To science, dreams are mental activities; and it considers that continuous activity in the brain leads or translates into dreams. Scientists say that our dreams occur when we are in the Rapid Eye Movement state while we are sleeping. This movement occurs when we are asleep and there is a rapid movement under the eyelids. This occurs every ninety minutes and this is repeated at least four to six times. After the four to six times this movement will stop.

Dreams are stored in short memory banks in our brains and we might remember them for a while. However, if the dream was not significant to us then we ignore and forget it, but if it seemed important, we think and talk about it. Some people have a better ability of remembering dreams, while other people claim they do not dream at all because they cannot remember their dreams. We have dreams every night even if we completely forgotten the dream and it seems like we have not dreamt at all.

Note from the Teacher of GGKLI:

These little angels from KG Culture Class applied the principles of "Aaradhana" at the age of 4-5. They were so enthusiastic and energetic that they went to each classroom and requested to donate canned food. We all should be proud of them that they had collected 105 lbs. of canned food which is equivalent to 87 meals.

Param Pujya Gurudev asked every one to apply the principles of "USA". 1. Upasana - Sitting near God and absorb the divine qualities of God through complete surrender and devotion., 2. Sadhana - Eradicate all evil thoughts, tendencies, actions from life and adopt the good qualities in the life in place., 3. Aaradhana -Selfless service to the society without any expectation.

They are little stars with pure heart so they are like God. The seeds of adapting good qualities are being planted in them through good sanskars in the class by Teacher Anjali Awasthy by adapting "Sanskar Book" for each student. They have already shown their selfless service to society (Aaradhana) by collecting and donating the canned food. Bravo Little Angels you have applied principles of "USA" in staying in USA.

They are sincerely conveying their thanks to all who donated the foods. Let us all congratulate and give blessing to them to continue such divine work in their life.

GGKLI is not a regular LANGUAGE and CULTURE school but it is beyond that. It is an unique Bal Sanskar Shala to mold them to become Devata from human being under the guidance and divine blessings from Gurusatta.

GGKLI Teachers and Volunteers are committed to that and are requesting your continuous moral support and cooperation for this divine cause always.



Vasant Panchami Celebration at GGKLI

By Shimona Agarwal



On February 1st, the students were able to learn about important and influential personalities from India and also the meaning of 24 syllables of Gayatri Mantra during celebration of Vasant Panchami at Gayatri Gyan Kendra of Long Island. Vasant Panchami is very significant to Gayatri Pariwar as it is the spiritual birthday of its founder Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya. It is an auspicious day where any new socially uplifting projects are undertaken.

As usual, we began our celebration by chanting Gayatri Mantra, Ganesh and Guru stutti, and Mahamritunjay mantras.

In honor of Yug Sahitya Vistar year, Mrs. Dattaben Pandya of Stamford, Connecticut Pariwar came as a special



guest to present the information about the mission of All World Gayatri Pariwar and the importance of Gurudev's literature to all the parents of students of school.

To our greatest pleasure, we had Adarniya Pushkar Rajji, (Presently camped at Gayatri Chetna Center, NJ) a disciple of Pt. Shriram Sharam Acharya, come to GGKLI and in his melodious voice sing the pragra geet "Hey Prabhu Apani Kripa Ki Chhan Mein" and perform the Saraswati Puja after lighting a lamp. He blessed students and parents with his presence and gave a message of Vasant Panchmi. He stated in his message to parents to bring their children regularly to GGKLI to learn Vidhya that will build their character as well as good sanskars. He pointed out that the students who are attending the GGKLI are blessed by Gurusatta and they will

shine like Swami Vivekananda, Nivedita, Shradheye Dr. Pranav Pandya, Gandhiji, Sardar Patel and many more such great personalities in the future.

Our next part of the celebration involved the students from senior group (Group 7). Their project was to dress up as an important person who made an impact on India and its history. Some of these influential figures included those like Sant Kabir, Samarth Guru Ramdaas, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Sarda Maa, Pandit Shiraram Sharma Acharya Gurudev, Bhagvati Devi Sharma, Shradheye Dr. Pranav Pandya, Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Kalpana Chawala etc. Each of these individuals made a special impact on India and her freedom. For example, Ram Krishna Paramhansa was a 19th century Indian mystic who was believed to have achieved "enlightenment." Sarada Ma was the wife of Ramakrishnan Paramahansa and was also known as the "Holy Mother." She had high spiritual insights, though she was illiterate, and she believed in mind over everything else. Furthermore Kabir was one of the greatest poets in the history of the world, and was also an inspirational philosopher who tried to find common ground between Hindus and Muslims. Finally there is the extremely important Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya who is known for giving the world Yug Nirman Yojana for transforming the world and also the significance of Maha Gayatri mantra. He wrote and launched the "Akhand Jyoti" in 1940 which was one of the first steps of the renowned thought revolution. In 1953, he formed "Gayatri Pariwar," which aims to create mass awareness of cultural values in all aspects of human life. In 1971 he established Gayatri Pariwar's headquarters in Shantikunj, Hardiwar. Although he passed away, his teaching are still carried on through his disciples. Pt. Shriram Acharya's wife's name was Bhagwati Devi Sharma. She treated everyone with love and affection and encouraged millions of people into Gayatri Mantra.

Afterwards Culture group 6 students explained each of the syllables of the Gayantri Mantra. One of the key ideas was that there are 24 syllables that when spoken each activate a different gland in the body that release certain divine energies or qualities. Each of the students presented one of these syllables and mentioned what letter symbolizes what God, what gland the letter affects, and how does it affect the gland. Another important idea was that the Gayantri mantra is a universal Mantra and can be used in any religion as there is no mention of any specific God.

Finally, the day ended with National Antham and the tour of the outstanding posters displayed by the Culture group 5 students on the Vedic Sanatana Hindu Dharma, explaining the meaning of each word-Vedic, Sanatana, Hindu, Dharma.

Everyone enjoyed the festival with great enthusiasm. It was an educative, fun day filled with our Indian cultural values, bringing India once again close to our hearts.



Indian Festivals Word Search



Ganesh Chaturthi, Maharashtra



DIWALI
DUSSEHRA
GANESH CHATURTHI

G H I T E D Q G N W G B J H V W V W
 J A O M V D I W A L I N A L A C J T
 H W N L A K E R W C W N I E S V U S
 H O I E I T H B P D U K R P A D J L
 K Z B X S E H X J M P H H W N B W X
 E X E L S H G S A X U B T E T E J R
 T K T S K E C N A P E K A M P U N X
 R H U W J X J H C A L C R V A L N Y
 J D S W J A U S A J M R A S N W S O
 O Y O V Y M B W M T D N V O C K X V
 R S M A E Z A D Q J U R A S H N F S
 W G N S S W Q M S F W R N J A N T Q
 D T K J L C N I A F U V T O M L Q W
 I D G Z P V U T J K I L U H I C Y A
 N A H D N A B A H S K A R O I X J O
 E X M B L Y V T F E U E I N C R X H
 C B U U J F N D Y Z F I X A S J B E
 N E G G W U N E H H E A J M I K L C

HOLI
NAVARATHRI
RAKSHA BANDHAN

JANMAASHTAMI
ONAM
VASANT PANCHAMI



HANUMAN JAYANTI

COLOR
ME!!!



www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy

TRY THESE RIDDLES:

Q: How many apples can you fit into an empty box?

Q: You walk into a room with a match. In the room there is a stove, a heater and a candle. What do you light first?

Q: A farmer has seventeen sheep. All but nine of them die. How many sheep does he have left?

A: One, then it isn't empty anymore.

A: The match.

A: Nine.