



# Sanskritam As a Foreign Language (SAFL)

NEWSLETTER  
NOVEMBER 5, 2021

## ज्ञानार्थं संस्कृतम्

One of my favorite practices as a teacher is to ask new students why they have come to learn *Sanskritam*. Honesty is important here: if the answer is “my mom signed me up and I don’t know why,” then that’s the reason I hope to hear. After all, I had no idea why I was learning *Sanskritam* when I first started, either.

The second most popular answer to this question, however, always has to do with understanding “*what am I saying when I chant Sanskritam verses when I go to a temple.*” Another very truthful and valid motivation for coming to learn. Again, I remember myself being there not long ago (and I’m certainly still there). As SAFL teachers, we aim to equip students with a multipurpose *Sanskritam* toolbox, one which they can use for both day-to-day speech *and* to start to understand sacred texts and the writings of the revered sages for themselves.

Some of the earliest verses that I was able to understand in *Sanskritam* came from the *Bhagavad Gita*. It was one thing to read the English meaning written out in elegant prose by scholars, but another to piece the meaning together myself word-by-word from the Sanskrit. Even while chanting, the occasional word that I had learned would show up, and that would excite me.

One of the first full verses that I was able to understand myself (with a little help from my dad) was:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥ (2.47)

There are numerous scholars who have written extensively on this verse, and I had chanted it many times before I learned enough *Sanskritam* to parse out the words for myself. My parents always roughly translated it as: “Do your best and leave the rest,” and though I nodded my head each time I was told, the meaning didn’t fully hit. But take the first two पाद alone (हे अर्जुन! कर्मणि एवते अधिकारः। फलेषु मा।) and we already have a whole world of meaning!

I can just imagine the scene in front of my eyes: the divine Lord teaching his disciple (Arjuna) about detachment from the fruit of action and committing wholeheartedly to the action for action’s sake alone, in the middle of the magnificent Kurukshetra!

Needless to say, my personal understanding of detachment from the fruit of action was made much clearer from then on, in large part due to my own understanding of the verse from the original Sanskrit.

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The second part of reading shlokas, in my mind, is putting the knowledge into practice in one’s own life. Again, it’s much more difficult to do this when one lacks a personal interaction with the verse itself, one that knowledge of Sanskrit facilitates.

For me, I never thought twice about this verse before I understood the words myself. Now, however, that’s changed. As a college student aiming high in an achievements-driven world, it’s difficult to remember not to ponder the results of the exam I just took and not to let those results (good or bad) deter me from my path.

Putting this one verse into practice is certainly the journey of a lifetime. But that journey (so far) has certainly been made all the more sweet, now that I can understand Bhagavan Krishna’s words for myself.

जयतु संस्कृतम् !

**Anika Nerella**

SAFL Class of 2017

SAFL Teacher

Pursuing B.A. Economics at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL

## IMPORTANT DATES

**Nov 27 - Dec 1, 2021** – Thanksgiving Break (All courses)

**Dec 4 - 8, 2021** – Unit Exams – II (100 Level – All Sections)

**Dec 23 – Jan 7, 2022** – Winter Break (All courses)

**Jan 15 - 19, 2022** – Final Exams (All courses)

### **Inter-semester break**

**Jan 22 - 26, 2022** – Inter semester break. No classes (All courses)

### **Second Semester - Spring 2022**

**Jan 29 - Feb 2, 2022** – First day of class

**Mar 5 - 9, 2022** – Unit Exams – I (100 Level – All Sections)

**Mar 19 - 23, 2022** – Midterm Exams (200 and 300 Levels – All Sections)

**Apr 16 - 20, 2022** – Unit Exams II- (100 Level – All Sections)

**May 21 - 25, 2022** – Final Exams (All courses)

### REGISTRATION FOR 2022-23

Registration for SAMS200 Direct Entry Exam (for new students wishing to enter the SAFL SAMS200 level directly under the fast-track option) opens in February 2022, and the exam will be conducted in March 2022.

Registrations for SAFL 2022-23 Academic Year opens in April 2022.

Stay tuned for details...

## सुभाषितम्

अद्धिर्गात्राणि शुध्यन्ति मनः सत्येन शुध्यति ।

विद्यातपोभ्यां भूतात्मा बुद्धिर्ज्ञानेन शुध्यति ॥

मनुस्मृतिः – ५/१०९

जलेन शरीरं पवित्रं भवति । सत्यवदनेन मनः पवित्रं भवति । विद्यया तपसा च भूतात्मा पवित्रः भवति । ज्ञानेन बुद्धिः पवित्रा भवति ।

The body is purified by water, the mind by truth, the soul by knowledge and austerity, the reason by wisdom.

Courtesy: <https://sa.wikisource.org>

## Articles - लेखनानि

### यक्षप्रश्नः

पाण्डवाः वनवासकाले एकदा बहु तृषिताः अभवन्। जलं पातुम् इष्टवन्तः। युधिष्ठिरः नकुलम् उद्दिश्य अवदत् - "भवान् समीपे जलमं कुत्र अस्ति इति दृष्ट्वा आगच्छतु" इति। नकुलः कञ्चन सरोवरं दृष्टवान्। कञ्चन यक्षः तस्य सरोवरस्य पालकः आसीत्। सः अन्तर्हितः भूत्वा नकुलम् अपृच्छत् - "अहं काञ्चन प्रश्नान् पृच्छामि, तेषां समाधानं दत्त्वा एव भवान् जलं पातुं शक्नोति" इति। नकुलः बहु तृषितः आसीत्। सः यक्षं प्रति अवधानं न दत्तवान्। जलं पीत्वा मूर्च्छितः अभवत्। किञ्चित् समयानन्तरं युधिष्ठिरः सहदेवं प्रेषितवान्। नकुलः यां गतिं प्राप्तवान्, सहदेवः अपि तामेव गतिम् अन्वभवत्।

तदनन्तरं युधिष्ठिरः अर्जुनं प्रेषितवान्। यक्षः पुनः अवदत् "भवान् मम प्रश्नानाम् उत्तराणि उक्त्वा जलं पिबतु" इति। अर्जुनः यक्षस्य ध्वनिं श्रुत्वा तस्यां दिशि बाणप्रयोगं कृतवान्। किन्तु, यक्षः अदृश्य आसीत्! अर्जुनः अपि जलं पीत्वा मूर्च्छितः अभवत्। तदनन्तरं, युधिष्ठिरः भीमं प्रेषितवान्। यक्षः अवदत् - "जलार्थम् अत्र आगताः भवतः भ्रातरः मम आज्ञाम् उल्लङ्घ्य जलं पीत्वा मूर्च्छिताः अभवन्। भवान् वा मम आज्ञां शृणोतु। प्रथमं मम प्रश्नानाम् उत्तराणि उक्त्वा अनन्तरं जलं पिबतु!" इति। भीमः उक्तवान् - "अहं प्रथमं जलं पीत्वा अनन्तरं त्वया सह युद्धं करोमि!" इति। अनन्तरं सः अपि जलं पीत्वा भूम्याम् अपतत्। तदनन्तरं युधिष्ठिरः स्वयं तत्र अगच्छत्। तत्र भ्रातृणां स्थितिं दृष्ट्वा दुःखं प्राप्नोत्। "महावीराः मम अनुजाः एवं मूर्च्छिताः अभवन् चेत् अत्र किमपि कारणं स्यात्" इति अचिन्तयत्। यक्षः अवदत् - "भवतः अनुजाः मम प्रश्नानाम् उत्तराणि न उक्तवन्तः। तेन कारणेन ते मूर्च्छिताः। भवान् मम प्रश्नानाम् उत्तराणि उक्त्वा अनन्तरं जलं पिबतु। युधिष्ठिरः उत्तराणि वक्तुम् अङ्गीकृतवान्।

"वायोः अपेक्षया शीघ्रतरं किम्?" - "मनः"

"भूमिः अपेक्षया कस्याः प्रधानता अधिका?" - "अम्बायाः"

"अत्यन्तं सुखं किम्?" - "तृप्तिः"

"विशिष्टं धनं किम्?" - "ज्ञानम्"

एवं युधिष्ठिरः यक्षस्य अनेकेषां प्रश्नानाम् उत्तरम् उक्तवान्। यक्षः सन्तुष्टः भूत्वा "भवतः भ्रातृषु कस्य प्राणदानं भवान् इच्छति?" इति अपृच्छत्। कुन्तेः पुत्रः युधिष्ठिरः अहम् अस्मि अतः कृपया माद्रेः पुत्रस्य नकुलस्य प्राणदानं करोतु" इति यक्षं प्रार्थितवान्। यक्षः साक्षात् यमधर्मराजः एव। सः निजस्वरूपं युधिष्ठिरस्य पुरतः प्रदर्शितवान्। युधिष्ठिरस्य सर्वेभ्यः अनुजेभ्यः प्राणदानम् अपि कृतवान्, अपि च अज्ञातवासकाले कोऽपि तान् सर्वान् अभिज्ञातुं न शक्नोति इति वरं दत्त्वा अन्तर्हितः अभवत्। युधिष्ठिरः सुखेन अनुजैः सह अज्ञातवासकालं यापितवान्।

**Narasinga Ujjuni Havildar**

Class: SAMS101J

## नवरात्रोत्सवः

सामान्यतया जनाः प्रतिवर्षं तेषां पारम्पर्य-कुटुम्ब-पद्धत्या नवरात्रपर्व आचरन्ति । अतः भारतदेशे भिन्नेषु प्रदेशेषु जनाः भिन्नपद्धत्या आचरन्ति।

वयम् एतम् उत्सवं सौरमान-पञ्चाङ्गानुसारम् आश्विनमासे आचरामः। नवरात्रपर्वणि जनाः नवदिनानि शक्तिदेवीं पूजयन्ति। नवरात्रपर्वणि प्रत्येकं दिनस्य वैशिष्ट्यम् अस्ति। प्रतिदिनं जनाः देव्याः ( लक्ष्म्याः, सरस्वत्याः, पार्वत्याः, दुर्गायाः ) पूजां कुर्वन्ति । प्रथमदिनत्रयं दुर्गादेव्याः उपासनं भवति। दुर्गादेवी अस्मान् भयात् अज्ञानात् च रक्षति । अनन्तरं चतुर्थपञ्चमषष्ठदिनेषु जनाः लक्ष्मीदेव्याः उपासनं कुर्वन्ति । लक्ष्मीः रूपं तेजः शौचं च ददाति । अन्ते सप्तमअष्टमनवमदिनेषु सरस्वतीदेवीं जनाः नमन्ति। सरस्वती ज्ञानस्य प्रतिरूपमस्ति ।

नवरात्रं सर्वे जनाः समानरीत्या न आचरन्ति। केचन जनाः एतस्मिन् उत्सवे निष्ठया उपवासं कृत्वा ध्यानादिकं कुर्वन्ति। किन्तु केचन बहुविधानि खाद्यानि, गीतनृत्यादीनि कृत्वा वैभवेन आचरन्ति । तथैव गुजरात्-राज्ये नवरात्रकाले गर्बानृत्यं कुर्वन्ति। गर्बानृत्ये जनाः गर्बादीपं मध्ये स्थापयित्वा तं परितः नृत्यं कृत्वा, तां ज्वालामेव देव्याः प्रत्यक्षरूपमिति विश्वसन्ति। भारतदेशे केषुचित् प्रदेशेषु जनाः दशहरा - उत्सवं दशमे दिने आचरन्ति। दशहरा-उत्सवाचरणेन जनाः यत् शुभं प्राप्नुवन्ति तत् पापान् परिहरति इति विश्वसन्ति। नवरात्रोत्सवे तेलङ्गाना राज्ये जनाः बतुकम्म उत्सवमपि आचरन्ति। महिलाः वर्णमय विविधानां पुष्पाणां गुच्छान् तडागानां जलेषु स्थापयित्वा तटेषु नृत्यन्ति। प्रकृत्यां परिसरे च जनानां स्नेहभावम् आदरं च द्रष्टुं शक्नुमः।

### Citations:

<https://www.telanganatourism.gov.in/bathukamma/about-bathukamma.html>

<https://www.siddhayoga.org/navaratri/about-navaratri>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Navratri>

**Samyutha Talagadadeevi**

Class: SAMS301G

## Sanskritam Shines Forever

Wisdom is immeasurable. Great sages of *Bhāratam* profoundly weaved an eminent spirit of knowledge in *Sanskritam* verses. We can never imagine the depth of erudition elucidated during the ancient times of *purānas*, *itihāsas*, and *kāvya*s. *Sanskritam* has been the most expressive means to explain various subjects. Proficiency in varied fields is seen in *Sanskritam* verses. Legendary rishis like *Veda Vyasa* as well as other scholars, have taught the world monumental principles in science, mathematics, economics, *āyurveda*, atomic energy, surgery, *yoga* and many other fields. *Sanskritam* has been part and parcel of everyday life in the past. Numerous interesting facts have been described in this *devabhāṣā*. *Sanskritam* is the literary bridge to reach all those treasure troves.

Sanskrita Bharati is facilitating the study of *Sanskritam* by providing various avenues to learn the language in a fun and easy way in *Bhāratam* and in many other countries. Young students in USA have been blessed to study *Sanskritam* and stay connected with the roots of our ancient culture through SAFL (Sanskritam As a Foreign Language) which is taught by a team of able and dedicated teachers. Online or in-person intensive learning programs in the form of *Shibirams* (camps) are conducted for adults and children to learn *Sanskritam* in an immersive atmosphere. In addition, Sanskrita Bharati offers a distance learning program (DLP) for adults to learn *Sanskritam* from the novice level. Many such programs conducted by Sanskrita Bharati cater to the needs of adults and children by providing them different avenues to learn *Sanskritam*.

When we recite *shlokas* today, we also try to understand the inner meaning of the verses and connect ourselves with them. Recitation of *shlokas* also helps us enhance our memory power and refine our mind. We can also benefit by understanding and following the ideals and advices conveyed in the various *sūktis* and *subhāṣitams*. Knowing the significance of spiritual texts revitalizes our lifestyles and directs them towards the welfare of mankind. *Bhagavad Gita* is one such famous text which provides guidance in choosing the right path in life. So let us read, learn, and benefit ourselves in the process.

*Sanskritam* is a blessing to humans to gain access to knowledge propounded in ancient Indian texts and lead inspiring lives. There is a lot of knowledge and wisdom to be gained by the study of scriptures in *Sanskritam*. This is attracting people of all nationalities to study *Sanskritam* so that they can read and understand the treatises from the sources directly by themselves. So, would it not be more exciting to learn *Sanskritam* and explore the treatises ourselves? This is what attracted me to learn *Sanskritam* in the first place, because translated verses of *Sanskritam* texts have inherent limitations and sometimes could even have flawed interpretations.

Traditional education and ancient Indian scriptures, especially in *Sanskritam* convey a lot of knowledge. The past has granted the future a bountiful wisdom encapsulated in Sanskrit verses. With a conscientious passion, let us carry forward *Sanskritam* to the future with the help of institutions like Sanskrita Bharati, and may the forthcoming generations get enlightened by study of the vast *Sanskritam* literature.

Although today's world is filled with modernity and technological advances and comforts, many people do get inspired to learn and follow the ancient traditions and knowledge. May the future be filled with the power of wisdom conveyed through the divine language, Sanskritam.

जयतु संस्कृतम्। लसतु संस्कृतम्।

**Roopa Rani Bussa**

SAFL Teacher

## My Experience in Prajnaa Shibiram

Imagine the expectations I had about going to Walden West Science Center in Saratoga, CA attending *Prajnaa* camp for the first time in person: all the friends I would make, the teachers I would meet in person, and the natural wilderness I would experience - all while learning *Sanskritam* like how my older brother did in the past while he was enrolled in the SAFL program. But in reality, I sat in front of my Mac and experienced the *Prajnaa* camp virtually. And to my surprise, I got everything that I imagined minus the wilderness (which I made with a virtual background). This was the experience that I had during the 2021 *Prajnaa Sanskritam* camp.

When I entered the first class, I would never have expected this camp to be quite possibly the best of the camps that I have attended. The concepts were difficult at first, but the more and more we dove into the material, the more and more I started to realize that Sanskrit was in fact a very interesting and enjoyable language. I learned about *prātipadikams*, *vibhaktis*, and *lakāras*. During the third day, our teacher announced we could do a skit. Now I was very hooked. The year before, my brother had made an animated skit and I got inspired to do the same. I knew that on my own I would not be able to do this. Then I remembered that we could work as teams. So, I made friends with another fellow student in my class. We decided that we would do a story that was extremely funny. The long story would have taken me hours to complete by myself, but with the help of my friend I was able to finish the translation and the animation quickly. The skit was received well, and little did I know that my camp collaborator and friend eventually became my SAMS201L classmate! Thanks to my *Prajnaa* teachers Deesha Bhagini and Hymavathi Bhagini for helping me in my *Sanskritam* journey.

**Vaynil Narayanan**  
Class: SAMS 201L

## Language Immersion

While many of you *Sanskritam* learners may have grown up hearing the blissful language at home, my introduction to *Sanskritam* was different. I wanted to study *Sanskritam* out of my own passion and enjoyment, so my parents enrolled me in *Sanskrita Bharati*. With no prior knowledge, and an avid partaking in reciting the *Vedas*, I had an unbound curiosity for this divine language. I studied hard and cleared the Direct Entry exam to 200 level, which only proved to be a vigorous and hands-on undertaking. It has, however, significantly changed my life. So far, in this academic year, my new bonds and friendship with my classmates positively kept my attention towards learning, and my interest only grew.

With the inflow of *Sanskritam* knowledge in our household, I've even begun teaching the language to my parents. Our residence is filled with our attempts at using new words while communicating in simple sentences. I've become immersed in the language, and it has opened my mind in many ways that I cannot explain. *Sanskritam* truly has become embedded in me.

**Vikram Pedapudi**  
Class: SAMS 201F

## Deepavali



Deepavali (aka Deepavali or Diwali), is one of the biggest festivals celebrated in Bharat, and around the world. This bright festival is celebrated by people of several religions including Hindus, Jains, and Sikhs. Deepavali is usually celebrated sometime in October or November. There is no set date, since it is based on the Hindu lunar calendar. In Sanskrit, Deepavali means “row of lights”, thus earning its name “festival of lights.” During the festival, diyas, or oil lamps are placed around the exterior of temples and houses, and placed in rivers. Though it is celebrated for a variety of reasons in different regions of Bharat, Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, is the main focus of worship. At night, families and friends gather and light diyas and fireworks. It is a time of coming together and celebrating the victory of light over darkness.

**Nandini Duggaraju**

Class: SAM201L

## Ganesh Chaturthi

There are many festivals in India that are celebrated with lots of joy, ranging from *holi* (which is in March or April) to *dīpavali* (which happens during October or November). While some holidays run for only a day, a number of them go on for several days. For instance, *Navratri*, which literally means “nine nights” in *Sanskritam*, is for nine nights and ten days, and Durga Puja spans for four days. Some festivals are only held for one day like *Janmashtmi* and *Maha Shivaratri*. Ganesh Chaturthi, however is one very special festival that takes place in September which is celebrated during a span of several days.

*Ganesh Chaturthi* is the auspicious day of Lord Ganesha’s birth. Lokmanya Tilak, an Indian freedom fighter, suggested this holiday in 1893. This holiday is very popular in Maharashtra, but people all over the world take part in celebrating Ganesh Chaturthi. Many people have an idol of Lord Ganesha and pray throughout the festival. People generally pray to Ganesha for “prosperity, good fortune, and wisdom”. Lord Ganesha is also worshipped to remove all obstacles and hardships in life, hence his other name: *vighnaharta*, the one who removes obstacles. On each festive day of this holiday, there are special *pujas* with *arati* offered to Sri Ganesha. Sanctified offerings of different Indian sweets are distributed as *prasad*. Men and women dress up in colorful Indian attire.

At the end of this festival, the clay figure of Lord Ganesha that is worshipped in homes is submerged in a body of water. At the end of the holiday, huge idols of Lord Ganesha are taken in a procession and later submerged in the ocean. This ritual symbolizes Lord Ganesha removing all the hardships and obstacles of one’s household. In Sanskrit, the act of submerging Ganesha into the water is called *visarjanam*.

People who celebrate this festival love spending their time in preparing and executing all the rituals. To conclude, this holiday is celebrated with a lot of love, devotion, and enjoyment.

**Diya Dave**

Class: SAMS101J

## Gaṇitam

You may be thinking, “how is *Sanskritam* related to math?” In *Sanskritam*, math is pronounced as *gaṇitam*. As *gaṇitam* is all around us, it is important for us to know how and by whom it was created. To start, a great ancient Indian mathematician invented the number zero. He was Aryabhata, one of the first prominent Indian mathematicians to ever walk on Earth. But unfortunately, the rules he fabricated were not documented formally. Aryabhata’s most famous books are the *Āryabhaṭīyam* & the *Ārya-siddhāntam*.

Brahmagupta was born in the 7th century. He created rules and methods to the number zero, which were luckily documented in *Sanskritam*. One of his many works, *Brāhmasphuṭasiddhānta*, contained many mathematical findings. It had numerous rules of arithmetic which are included in the mathematical findings to solutions today. These were written in verse form. These played and still play quite an important role in modern day math.

*Iriññāttappiḷli Mādhavan Nampūtiri*, also commonly known as *Mādhava of Sangamagrāma*, later improved on Aryabhata’s discovery of zero. *Sanskritam* has many benefits similar to math. Take memorization for example, if you had to remember a very complicated mathematical formula, it would be quite the challenge. But you would have to read it over and over again till you remember it. Memorization is an important feature of mathematics. Similarly, this is an integral aspect of *Sanskritam* that yields tremendous memory power. Just like mathematics, *Sanskritam* is very buildable and can be extremely easy to understand if you put two and two together. For example, we all learned once upon a time that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , and later on started to solve equations such as  $2(3x) = 4(3x)$ . The same goes for *Sanskritam*; once we learn the base letters, we can then learn words and their definitions. There are words put together to form other words that make perfect definitional sense.

India is rich with knowledge, of which much has contributed greatly to math. To answer our previous question, many of the documents and scripts of great mathematicians were written in *Sanskritam*, yet we did not think of learning *Sanskritam* until recently. So it is now important for us to learn *Sanskritam* to educate people and ourselves about our important and exquisite history.

**Preksha Jayaram**

Class: SAMS101D



## Chottanikkara Bhagavathy Temple

India has many *devamandirAni* or temples. These temples are filled with mysteries holding powerful energies. One of these temples is the Chottanikkara temple.

Chottanikkara Temple is located in the city of Kochi, Kerala where Devi Bhagavati resides. Devi Bhagavati is a form of Durga, and she resides in this temple with her brother Maha Vishnu. The temple is situated in a dense forest believed to be infested by *yakshas and raktharakshashas*. There are many stories about how the temple came to be. One of them is associated with Adi ŚaṅkarAcAryaH, an Indian philosopher and theologian.

ŚaṅkarAcAryaH noticed that there was no temple for the worship of Devi Saraswati in Kerala, so he went to Kashmir and meditated for several days. Soon, the beautiful goddess appeared. He told her that he would like to bring her to Kerala and establish a temple dedicated to her worship. The goddess agreed. She said she would follow him on foot but with one condition: if he trusted her, he was not allowed to look back to see if she was following him or not. If he turned around, she stopped where she was. *Adi ŚaṅkarAcAryaH* agreed and they began their journey, ŚaṅkarAcAryaH leading the way. The goddess' anklets tinkled and let him know that she was there. But when they reached Kodachadri hills, the tinkling stopped. ŚaṅkarAcAryaH waited a few moments and stole a quick glance behind him to find the goddess was still with him. In keeping with the condition, the goddess stopped right there. This is the spot that later turned into the Mookambika Temple. ŚaṅkarAcAryaH, however, did not give up. He apologized extensively for breaking the condition and pleaded for the goddess to go with him to Kerala. Finally, the goddess agreed to a compromise and came to Chottanikkara in Kerala, where the Chottanikkara temple stands today.

Each day begins in the temple with the blowing of the conch, and the rendering of divine music through musical instruments. This delightful ritualistic music spreads joy and peace to spiritual seekers. It is believed that Sree Mookambika Saraswathy is also present at the temple in the mornings, which is why the Mookambika Temple at Kollur opens after Goddess Saraswathy returns late in the morning. Magnificent temples of the goddess hold many mysteries and show the rich culture of India.

**Ritsika Dutta**

**Class: SAMS101B**

## Ganesha Chaturthi

*Ganesha Chaturthi* is one of the major festivals that is celebrated across India. Ganesha is considered to be the remover of all obstacles and hence, many people pray to him before beginning any new activity. *Ganesha Chaturthi* is the day of Ganesha's birthday, which is the fourth day of the Hindu month of *Bhadrapada*. This usually falls sometime between August and September according to the Gregorian calendar. During this festival, devotees make a representation of Ganesha out of clay and worship it for several days. On the last day of this festival, devotees take the clay figure outside in a procession marked with singing and chanting that culminates in an eventual submersion of this in a body of water. The reason behind using clay is, it is one of the five principle elements of the Universe, commonly referred to as the *Pancha Bhutas*.

Coming to the looks of Ganesha, (what he holds and his body parts), there are very deep meanings and importance to every aspect. He has four arms, hence the name *Chaturbhuj*. He holds an *ankusam*, *pasam*, *ratna kalasam*, and a *modakam*. The *ankusam* cuts away hindrances, the *pasam* has control over all senses, the *ratna Kalasam* fulfills all desires, and the *modakam* gives auspiciousness and pleasure. He also has a *vahana* or vehicle called the *mushaka*. Sitting on the *mushakha*, Ganesha meditates and controls all our desires.

In addition to the above, Ganesha's most prominent feature, his elephant head, has a historical story behind it. One day Lord Parvathi (His mother) was taking a shower and told Ganesha to guard and not allow anyone inside. A little later, Lord Shiva (His father) arrived and tried to enter the private quarters of Parvati. Ganesha said he had instructions to not allow anyone inside. Subsequently, Shiva got extremely angry and they both got into a fight. In the course of the battle, Lord Shiva cut-off Ganesha's head with his *trisulam*. Later, Parvathi found out about the battle and felt extremely *sad about her son's death*. Upon seeing Parvati in her sad condition, Shiva ordered his *ganas* to go find a new head for Ganesha. They later found the head of a demon named *Gajasura* and replaced Ganesha's head. Since then, Ganesha had an elephant head.

From this story it can be perceived that Lord Ganesha is the combined force of Shiva and Shakti. By worshipping Ganesha, one can also get the blessings of both Shiva and Shakti.

**Kalyan Cheruvu**

Class: SAMS101J

## Navaratri

*Navaratri* is the holiday that normally comes during the month of October, this year from October 7<sup>th</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup>. Each of the nine auspicious nights of *Navaratri* are uniquely celebrated. The last day is known as *Dussehra*, where individuals bring food and offer it to the gods, and also hold puja meetings for the celebration in order to mark the end of *Navaratri*. All parts of Bharat celebrate *Navaratri* and *Dussehra* in their own unique ways. In the northeastern region of India (West Bengal, Assam, etc.), Devi Durga is ceremoniously worshipped. However, other regions (western & southern regions of India) focus on this festival being the triumph of Lord Rama over Ravana. Some people even keep the *golu*, which are figurines that symbolize the spiritual progression of human beings and human beginnings. Those are what the *golu* steps also symbolize.

There are also many types of celebrations, both throughout India and outside of India, that are celebrated during *Navaratri*. To many people, *Navaratri* is known as the festival of Goddess Durga. Many Hindus may keep a designated puja for her, in order to worship her and pray for the welfare of good over evil. Some celebrations include pujas and *garba* (*dandiya*), in the region of Gujarat in India. This form of celebration usually involves dancing while rhythmically tapping the sticks simultaneously. The first three nights honor goddess Durga, the next three nights honor goddess *Lakshmi*, and finally, the last three nights honor goddess *Saraswati*. In order of progression, we seek from the three goddesses the capacity to overcome negativity within us, the wealth of noble virtues, and transcendental knowledge. The last day, *Dussehra*, is used to celebrate the victory of events from Ramayana. The tenth day of this festival is celebrated as Vijayadashami. Many people pray for the new and fresh start of new beginnings, and to attain an abundance of blessings from all the deities. In Hinduism, this tenth day is cherished to establish new and positive beginnings so we are blessed with all our undertakings.

This is how *Dussehra* has been celebrated in India, and our fondest hope is to continue to celebrate this festival forever.

**Rishab Sai**

Class: SAMS300F

## Diwali

*Diwali* is the Indian festival of lights. This festival celebrates the reunification of Devi Sita, Lord Rama's wife, who was captured by a demon (*an asura*) named Ravana. In Indian *Puranas*, Ravana is said to have ten heads and to be stronger than an ox. He was also the king of a huge empire. However, *Diwali* really celebrates the return of victorious Rama and his wife to his home, Ayodhya.

People celebrate *Diwali* by feasting, buying gifts, and having celebrations with fireworks. *Diwali* usually lasts for about a week. This year, the festival falls in November. People usually decorate their homes and patios with clay lamps to symbolize light or knowledge or goodness. This night is also celebrated to honor goddess Laxmi. You might be wondering why *Diwali* is called the festival of lights if it's all about a God rescuing his wife and returning home to his kingdom. Well, *Diwali* is called the festival of lights because it is also about the good overpowering the evil. Or, the light banishing darkness. People also usually do a religious gathering and pray to goddess Laxmi and God Ganesha. This is called a *puja*. To sum it up, *Diwali* is an Indian festival of lights which represents good overcoming evil.

**Soham Patel**

Class: SAMS101K

# Citrāṇi



अस्माकं भारतम्

Sai Smaran Dasu

Class: SAMS101E



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## **SAFL Newsletter**

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