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# Hindu Festivals & Holidays



VHPA

*Sept 19, 2006*



# India –2006 Holidays list (Partial)

Sl No.	Date	Day	Holiday	Remarks
1	14-Jan	Sat	Makhara Sankranthi	
2	10-Jan	Tue	Bakrid	
3	<b>26-Jan</b>	Thu	<b>Republic Day</b>	<b>Mandatory</b>
4	26-Feb	Sun	Mahashivaratri	
5	14-Apr	Fri	Good Friday / Holi Feast	
	01-May	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Labor Day</b>	<b>Mandatory</b>
6	<b>15-Aug</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>Independence Day</b>	<b>Mandatory</b>
7	15-Aug	Tue	Janmashtami	
8	28-Aug	Mon	Ganesha Chaturthi	
	02-Oct	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Gandhi Jayanthi</b>	<b>Mandatory</b>
9	22-Oct	Sun	Naraka Chaturdasi	
10	<b>1-Nov</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Rajyotsava Day</b>	<b>Mandatory</b>

\*\* Note: Falls on a weekly holiday. Therefore additional holidays are declared



# National Holidays

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- ❑ **Jan 26 – Republic day:** On this day in 1950, Indian new constitution came into force and the country was established as sovereign democratic republic of India. Massive parades and folk dances performed in capitals and other cities.
- ❑ **May 01 – Labor Day**
- ❑ **Aug 15 – Independence Day:** On this day in 1947 the British occupation was ended. The National Flag is unfurled and public tributes are paid to national heroes. The prime minister hoists the flag on the historic RED FORT in Delhi.
- ❑ **Oct 2- Gandhi Jayanthi (birthday):** The birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi is celebrated with reverence and homage is paid to the great leader. In Delhi, large numbers of people gather at Gandhiji's Mausoleum (Rajghat) to offer floral tributes.
- ❑ **Nov 14 – Children's Day**

Note: Sindhu=Hindu=Indus=Indian



# Indian Festivals Are Fun



Every day is sacred  
Every moment is sacred  
Every object is sacred  
Every being is sacred  
Because we are all part of  
that One Supreme Being

**An Exuberant Expression of Enjoyment (Kama) and Prosperity (Artha) bounded by Duty (Dharma); Festivals are a defining hallmark of the Indian Civilization**



# Festival a Day

Pongal

Holi

Lohri

Makar  
Sankrant  
i

Varsha Pratipada

Karva  
Chauth

Rakshabandha

Navaratri

Deepawali

Janamashtami

Ram Navami

Ganesha Chaturthi

Nag Panchami

Vasant  
Panchami

Onam

Mahavir Jayanti

Yugadi

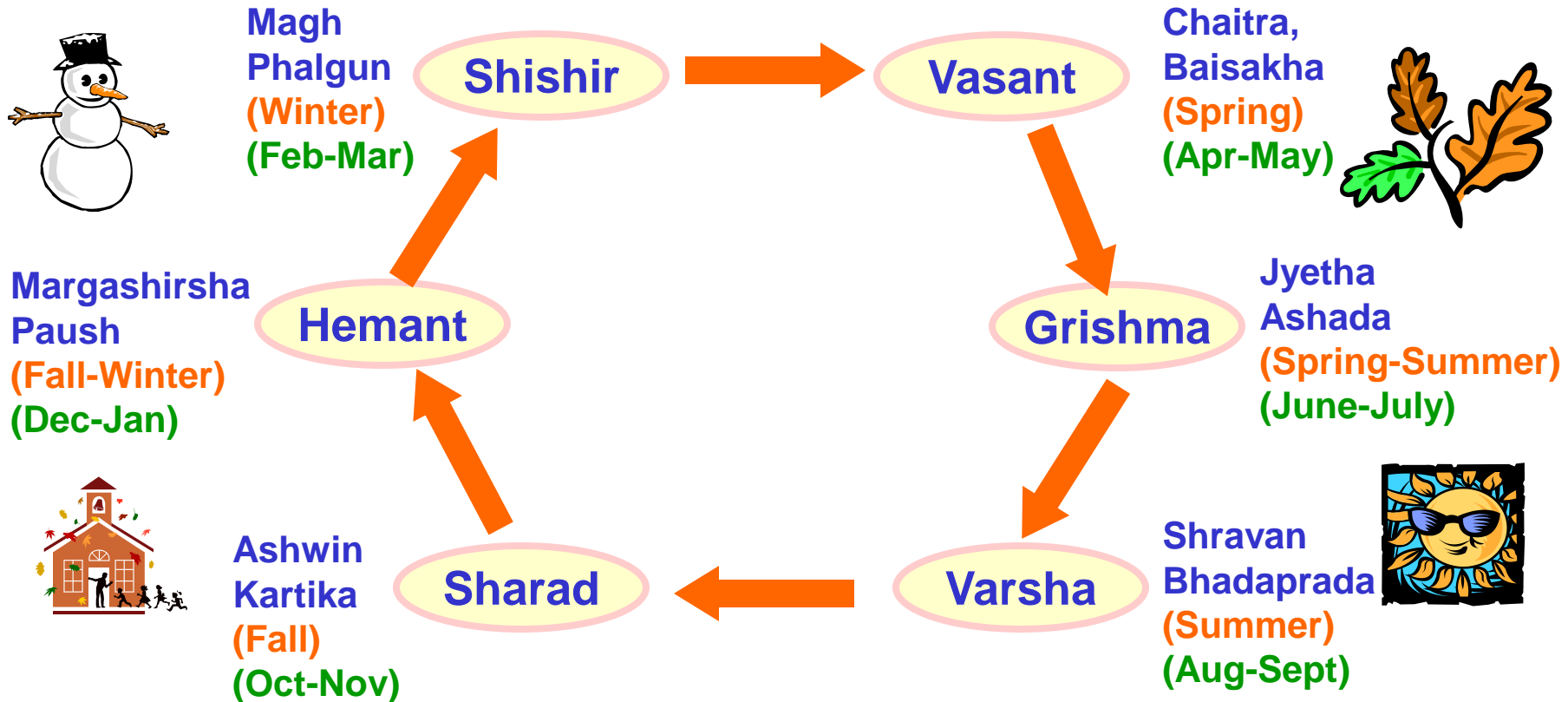
Guru  
Purnima

**Same Essence, Diverse Expressions**





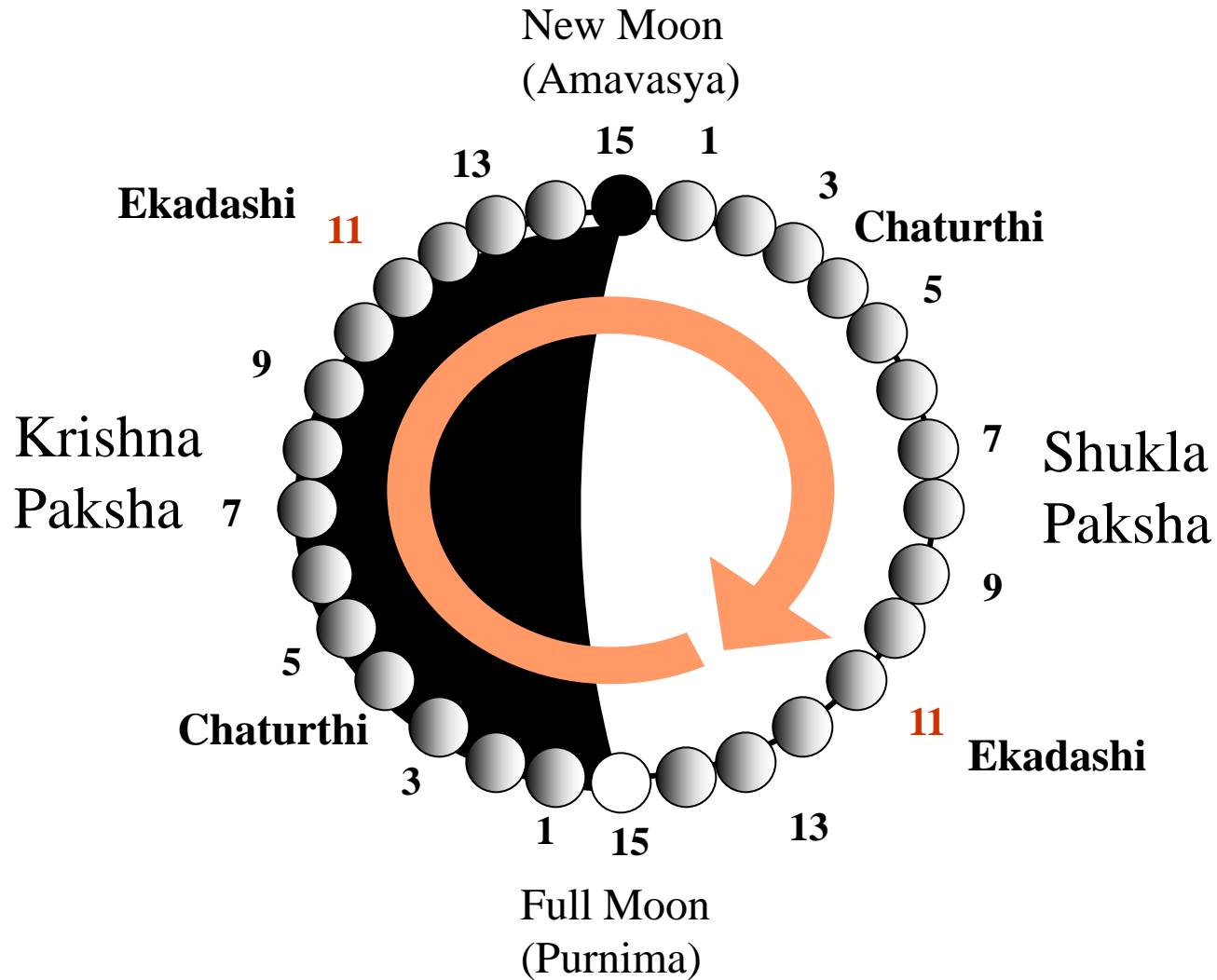
# Six Seasons



The six seasons accommodate a smoother transition from one weather to the next



# Lunar Cycle & Tithis





# List of Major Festivals

Hindu Season	Hindu Month	Western Month	Festival
Vasant	Chaitra	April	Ram Navami, Yugadi, Gudi Parva
	Baishakha	May	Baisakhi
Grishma	Jyeshtha	Jun	Ganga Dusshera
	Ashada	July	Guru Purnima
Varsha	Sravana	Aug	Naag Panchami, Rakshabandhan, Janamashtami
	Bhadrapada	Sep	Ganesha Chaturthi, Onam
Sharad	Ashwin	Oct	Navaratri, Vijayadashmi, Karva Chautha
	Kartika	Nov	Deepawali, Bhai Dooj
Hemant	Margashirsha	Dec	Panch Ganesha
	Pausha	January	Makarsankranti, Pongal, Lohri
Shishir	Magha	Feb	Vasant Panchami, Saraswati Pooja
	Phalgun	March	Maha Shivaratri, Holi

**Festivals All Year Round –  
National, Community, Family, Individual**





# Makara Sankranti

## Northward Journey of the Sun

The sun is the storehouse and the source of light and energy, the reason for our existence. That is why the Surya (sun) earns our respect, admiration and reverence.



- ❑ Jan 14<sup>th</sup> every year. The festival marks the Sun's northward journey (Uttaraayan).
- ❑ In Sanskrit language, 'Kranti' means change and 'Sankranti' means good change.
- ❑ This day is observed as the most auspicious day by the Hindus all over the world. In south India it is celebrated as **PONGAL** and in Punjab, India it is celebrated as **LOHRI**,
- Til seeds (sesame seeds) and jaggery are given as gifts (prasada) everywhere. The Til represents each one of us and Guda signifies the bond of sweetness (love and tender feelings) that holds us as a community.
- Makar Sankranti is also celebrated with great enthusiasm as the Kite flying day, especially in Gujarat, India.
- Daanam (charity) on this day is a duty



# Maha Shivarathri

## *Honor Lord Shiva*



- ❑ 14<sup>th</sup> day of second half of Magha (Feb/Mar)
- ❑ This festival is dedicated to the Hindu deity Lord Shiva. People fast the whole day and stay awake the whole night, singing praises of the Lord.
- ❑ One very popular story traces the origin of this festival to the churning of the Ocean of Milk by Devas (gods) and Asuras (wicked). It is said that during the churn (to obtain nectar - water of immortal life), they came across many unusual substances, including the deadly poison that threatened to envelope the entire universe by darkness. When the Lord Shiva was requested to save the creation, Shiva swallowed the poison without spilling a single drop. The poison left a dark blue mark on Shiva's throat. The gods praised and worshipped Shiva for saving the universe.

Maha means Great Being. Shiva means auspicious, "In whom the universe sleeps." Ratri means night. Maha Shivratri is a special night in honor of Lord Shiva.





# Saraswati Pooja - Vasant Panchami

## *Goddess of Learning*



- ❑ Saraswati is the Devi [Goddess] of learning, art, and music. She is dressed in white, symbolizing purity. She has four hands which symbolize the four aspects of the human personality: mind, alertness, intellect and ego.
- ❑ On this day, people dress in yellow; eat and distribute yellow sweets; schools and other places of learning are closed; young children are taught their first word; people perform Pitri Tarpan (honoring of ancestors)
- ❑ By honoring goddess Saraswati Hindus hope that the world will get rid of ignorance, and they celebrate the coming of spring with optimism

**'Vasant' means spring and 'Panchami' means fifth day. Celebration of Devi Saraswati & the coming of spring**







# HOLI – *Festival of Color*

Since Vedic times this festival has been termed as a “Yagna” or a sacred offering that marks “renewal” or re-birth.



- ❑ Holi ushers the spring season on the day of full moon in the month of March
- ❑ A social festival in which people from various regions and segments of the society join with fervor.
- ❑ Signifies triumph of goodness (Prahlad) over arrogance (Hiranyakashyapa) and falsehood (Holika). Bonfires are lit to symbolize burning of Holika.
- ❑ People forget and forgive past differences, hatred and petty jealousies. All that is burnt in the fire and what remains is truth, love, affection, respect and goodwill.
- ❑ “*Kama Dahan*” - The burning of *Kama* (lust) by Shiva (discipline)
- ❑ Games depicting the pranks of Krishna are played by boys singing and dancing around the fire
- ❑ Riotous crowds fill the streets, squirting colored water on all passers-by. Everyone participates in this fun. In the Morning people visit their relatives and friends, apply colors, eat sweets and move on.



# Ram Navami

## *Honor Lord Rama*



- Ramanavmi is the birthday of Bhagvan Ram, the seventh incarnation of Bhagvan Vishnu
- It falls on the ninth lunar day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra (March-April)
- Sri Ram is remembered:
  - As an Ideal son – Sri Ram understood and did his **duty** as a son. There was no talk of rights
  - As an Ideal brother – He stepped down from the thrown for Bharat, and went to exile
  - As an Ideal family member – He went to exile, and gave up all his happiness, to keep his family together



# Measure of Time

4,320,000 years = 1 **Mahayuga**

432000	864000	1296000	1728000
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71 Mahayugas = 1 **Manvantara** (or Manu's year)

1	2	3	4	5	6	.....	70	71
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14 Manvantaras = 1 **Kalpa** or day of Brahma

1	2	3	4	5	6	.....	13	14
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360 Ahoratras = 1 **Year of Brahma**

1	2	3	.....	360
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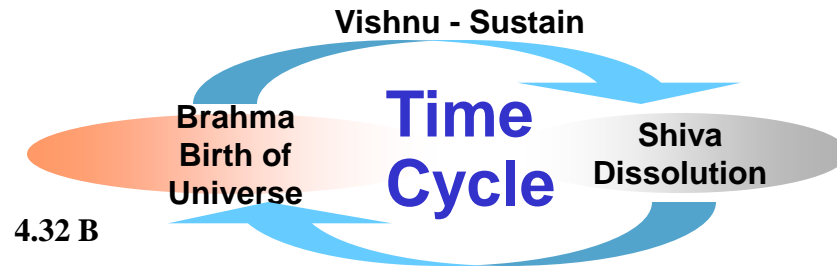
2 Kalpas = 1 Ahoratra or day and night of Brahma

100 Brahma years = **Life span of Brahma**

1	2	3	.....	100
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**51<sup>st</sup> Year of Brahma, 7<sup>th</sup> Manvantara, 28<sup>th</sup> Mahayuga, Kali Yuga 5107th Year**

<b>Yugas - Ages</b>	
Sata (Krita)	1,728,000 years
Treta	1,296,000 years
Dwapara	864,000 years
Kali	432,000 years



2 Kalpas = 1 Ahoratra or day and night of Brahma

1.55 T

311 T

After 36,000 of these dissolutions and creations there is total, universal annihilation, *mahapralaya*, when all three worlds, all time, form, space are withdrawn into **Siva**. After a period of total withdrawal a new universe or life-span of Brahma begins. **The cycle repeats infinitely.**





# Varsha Pratipada

## Hindu New Year

### Hindu New Year

*'Varsha' means year and  
'pratipada' means first  
day*



- **Vishu** – Kerala, South India
- **Yugadi** - Andhra Pradesh, S.E India
- **Poila Baishakh** – Bengal, East India
- **Gudi Parwa** – Maharashtra, West India
- **Bihu** – Assam North East, India
- **Vaishakhi** – Punjab, North India
- **Nava Varsha** - Nepal
- **Navreh** – Kashmir, North India

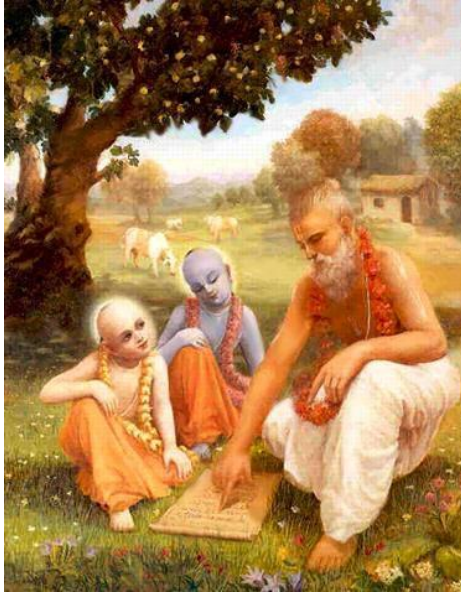
- ❑ Characteristic of the Hindu cultural mélange, Hindus in various states of India celebrate the New Year in their own ways
- ❑ In some parts of India, the tender leaves of neem mixed with jaggery are distributed on the occasion.
- ❑ The neem, extremely bitter in taste, and jaggery sweet and delicious, signify the two conflicting aspects of human life - **joy and sorrow**, success and failure, **ecstasy and agony**.
- ❑ People hang "gudis" on their windows on this day to celebrate Mother Nature's bounty.
- ❑ A "gudi" is a decorated pole with a brass or a silver vessel placed on it.



# Guru Purnima

## *Honor Teachers*

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**Guru in  
Vedic  
tradition is  
looked upon  
as God**

**Gu = darkness  
or ignorance  
Ru = remover  
Purnima = Full  
Moon**



- **Guru Purnima**, the day of the fullest moon of the year, is dedicated to the Guru.
- On this day, students honor the Guru and the order of Siddhas, and remember all the blessings they have received.
- It is a day to celebrate the teachings and transformation the Guru offers, and to offer back by refocusing our attention on learning.



# Rakshabandhan

## *Sisters and Brothers*



**Raksha + Bandhan =  
Rakshabandhan**  
**Raksha means protection,  
Bandhan means bond**

- ★ Raksha Bandhan is celebrated in the month of August
- ★ It is when girls and women tie a rakhi (a symbolic thread) onto their brothers' wrists and pray for their prosperity and happiness
- ★ The brothers, in turn, give their sisters a token gift and promise life long protection
- ★ It becomes the man's duty of the highest order, to protect that woman even if it cost him his life.
- ★ Priests tie rakshis to all members of the society
- ★ This is also the day when people ritually change their sacred thread





# Krishna Janmashtami

## *Honor Lord Krishna*



Janam = Birth

Ashtami = 8<sup>th</sup> day

Krishna = Dark

- ❖ On the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the dark half of the month of Shravana (August).
- ❖ Janmashtami is the birthday of Lord Krishna
- ❖ Temples and homes are beautifully decorated and lit. Parents and children create beautiful scenes (Jhankis) from the life of Sri Krishna. The celebrations are most remarkable around Mathura where Krishna was born.
- ❖ His birthday is celebrated at midnight because he was born at that hour. The devotees observe fasts until midnight.
- ❖ In many places of north India, an earthen pot containing yogurt is tied at top. Groups of boys or girls create formations amongst themselves and climb up on one another to break the pot. While they do this the spectators squirt colored water on them to make it even harder. It is a spectacular event. In south Indian homes, variety of sweets and savories are prepared and offered to Lord.





# Naga Panchami

## *Respect for All Creatures*

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**Naga = Cobra**

**Panchami = Fifth Day**

**It is on the fifth day of the bright half of the Shraavan that Naga Panchami, or the festival of snakes, is celebrated.**

- ❖ Respect for all creatures, and living our lives in peace and harmony with nature, is the fundamental to the Hindu tradition.
- ❖ Naga Panchami is one manifestation of this value system.
- ❖ Time (Kaala) “Eternity” is represented in the form of a serpent eating its tail.
- ❖ Snakes are bathed with milk, haldi-kumkum is sprinkled on their heads and milk and rice are offered as "naivedya".
- ❖ On this day digging the earth is prohibited, because the serpents live under the earth and digging may hurt them



# Ganesha Chaturthi

## Honor Lord Ganesha



- ❖ 4<sup>th</sup> day of Badrapadha month (Sep)
- ❖ Ganesha Chaturthi is celebrated in the honor of Lord Ganesha
- ❖ Preparations begin months in advance. Murtis (statues) of Sri Ganesh are constructed and placed within homes and places of assembly. Elaborate arrangements made for lighting and decoration.
- ❖ Sri Ganesha is worshipped for about 7-10 days. On the day final day, thousands of processions converge on the beaches to immerse the lovingly crafted murtis (statues) in the sea. This immersion is accompanied by drum beats, devotional songs and dancing.

**Impermanence - The  
Cycle of Creation and  
Dissolution**

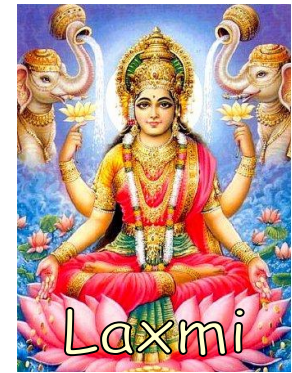
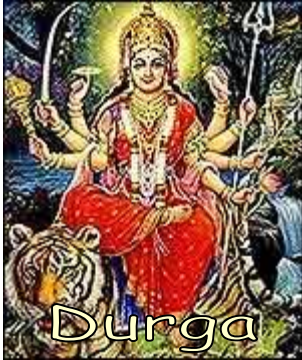
- Gajanan (GAJA) means elephant faced (another name of Ganesha)
  - **GA** indicates **gati** (final goal towards which the entire creation is moving, knowingly or unknowingly)
  - **JA** stands for **janma** (birth or origin)
  - Hence **GAJA** signifies Supreme from whom worlds have come out and towards whom they are progressing, to be ultimately dissolved in Him.
- Creation has a two fold manifestation, as the **microcosm** (sukshmanda) and the **macrocosm** (brahmanda).
  - The elephant head stands for the macrocosm (representing vastness or bigness), and the human body for the microcosm. The two form one unit.





# Navaratri & Dasshera

## Honor the Three Goddesses



- ❑ 1<sup>st</sup> to 10th day of Ashwin (Oct)
- ❑ In the North, Rama Lila recitations and music recall the life of Rama.
- ❑ In Karnataka, Dasshera is celebrated with magnificent pomp and pageantry as caparisoned elephants lead a colorful procession through the gaily-decorated streets of Mysore, a historic city.
- ❑ In Bengal and the East, it is called '**Durga Puja**'. Images of Goddess Durga are worshipped for four days and, on the last day, taken out in a procession and immersed in a river or the sea.
- ❑ The women and children of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka arrange dolls known as **Bomma Kolu** on artificial steps and decorate the steps and the nearby place with beautiful lamps and flowers.

- ❑ Navaratri consists of **nine** days.
- ❑ The first three days, we worship **Durga** to remove all bad qualities such as greed, jealousy, dishonesty, egoism, etc.
- ❑ The next three days, we worship **Laxmi**, the Goddess of wealth, to acquire positive qualities such as love, compassion, charity, etc.
- ❑ The last three days, we worship **Saraswati** for spiritual knowledge.



The tenth day is Vijayadashmi - A celebration of the victory of Sri Rama over Ravana



Garba - Raas



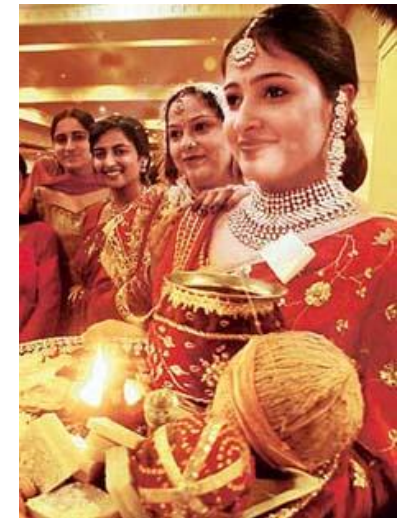
# Karva Chauth – *Festival of Love and Devotion*



- ❑ Vrata (fast) kept by married Hindu women for the sake of their husbands
- ❑ Celebrated nine days before Diwali, on the fourth day of the waning moon in the month of Kartik (October/November)
- ❑ Women pray to Ishwar for the long & prosperous lives of their husbands
- ❑ It represents their love and devotion to their spouse.
- ❑ Known as Karva Chauth in Northern India but is celebrated by other names on other days in almost all parts of Bharat

- ❑ Karva is a pitcher filled with sacred water
- ❑ It is offered to the moon to show respect and seek its blessings
- ❑ Since the moon is beautiful, vibrant, and everlasting, the women pray to it to bless their husbands with a long life

- ❑ All married women (young & old) keep a fast for their husbands the entire day, beginning before sunrise and ending only after they sight the moon; most women do not eat or even drink any water the entire day
- ❑ At night, women dress up in elaborate, traditional clothing (usually red or pink)
- ❑ They gather in the prayer room to perform pooja, and an elder women tells the story of karva chauth
- ❑ The women pray for the welfare of their husbands and then wait to see the moon; they pray to the moon, and when they see it, they take the blessings of all the elders and their husbands
- ❑ The fast is broken by the husbands generally offering water and food to their wives





# Deepawali – Festival of lights

*A Five Day Festival to Renew, Rejoice, Reflect, Resolve*

## Festival of lights

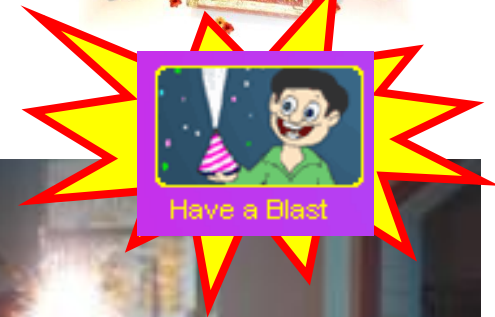
*(‘Deepa’ means lamplight and ‘avali’ means row).*



**Purify our ego, like the lamp, in the service of the society**



- ❑ 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> day of 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Kartika (Oct/Nov)
- ❑ Deepawali is literally the festival of lights symbolizing the lighting of the lamp of knowledge, and removing ignorance, in our lives and in those of others.
- ❑ This is the most loved festival of India. Every home is decorated with twinkling lamps to welcome Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity.
- ❑ Fireworks and illumination lend colour and picturesque ness to this festival.
- ❑ People exchange greetings of Diwali Festival with near and dear ones by a warm hug, a box of sweets and delightful Diwali Gifts.
- ❑ This festival celebrates Lord Rama’s victorious return to his capital from exile.
- ❑ Beginning of the Fiscal year
- ❑ Marks the advent of a new season and the sowing of new crops.







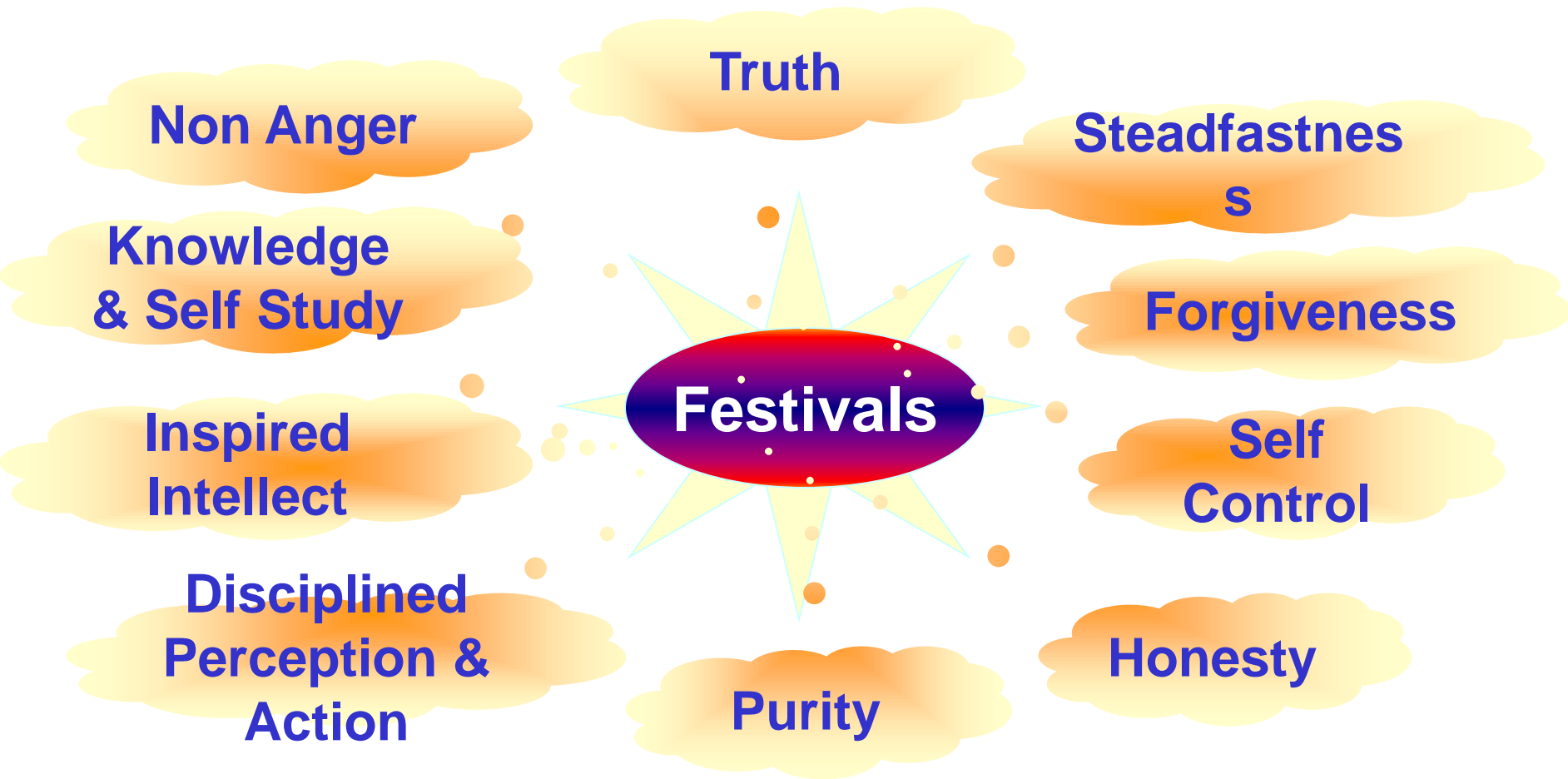
# Festivals Sustain, Integrate, Hold



**Hindu Festivals are a Living Expression of Dharma and tie together all elements of the society into a harmonious whole**



# Festivals Teach Values



**Hindu festivals teach essential values of life and help us grow by practicing what we learn**



# Festivals Mold Our Attitude



**Festivals shape our view of life and its relationship with the universe.**