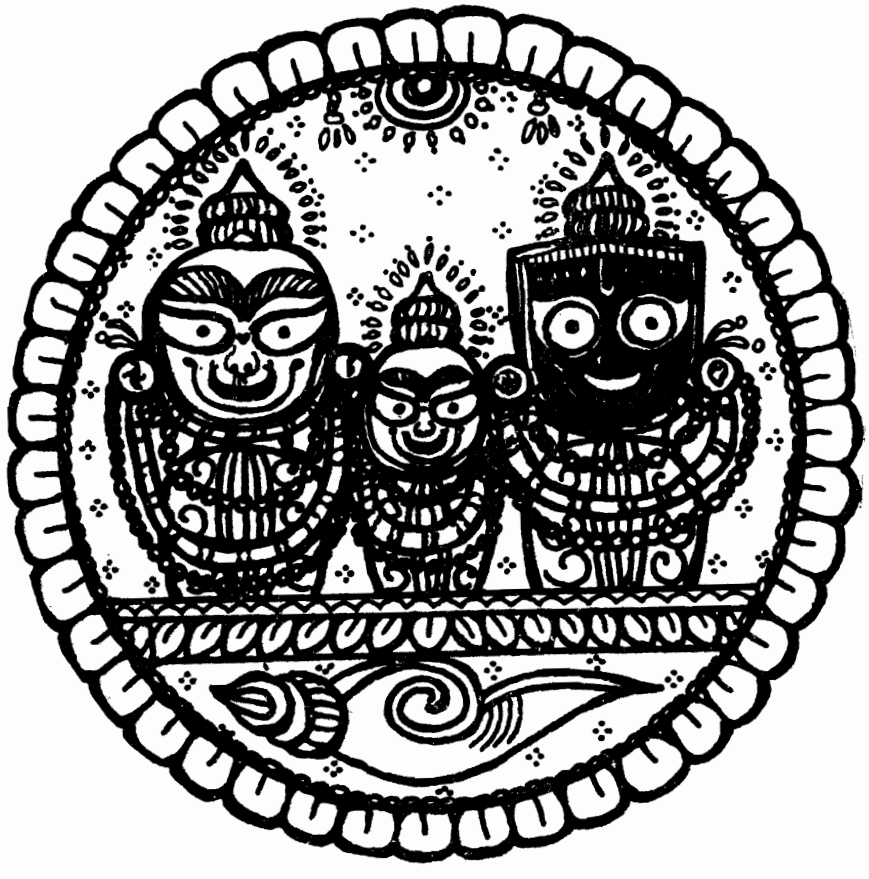
# Festivals of India



**Hare Krishna Sunday School**

International Society for Krishna Consciousness

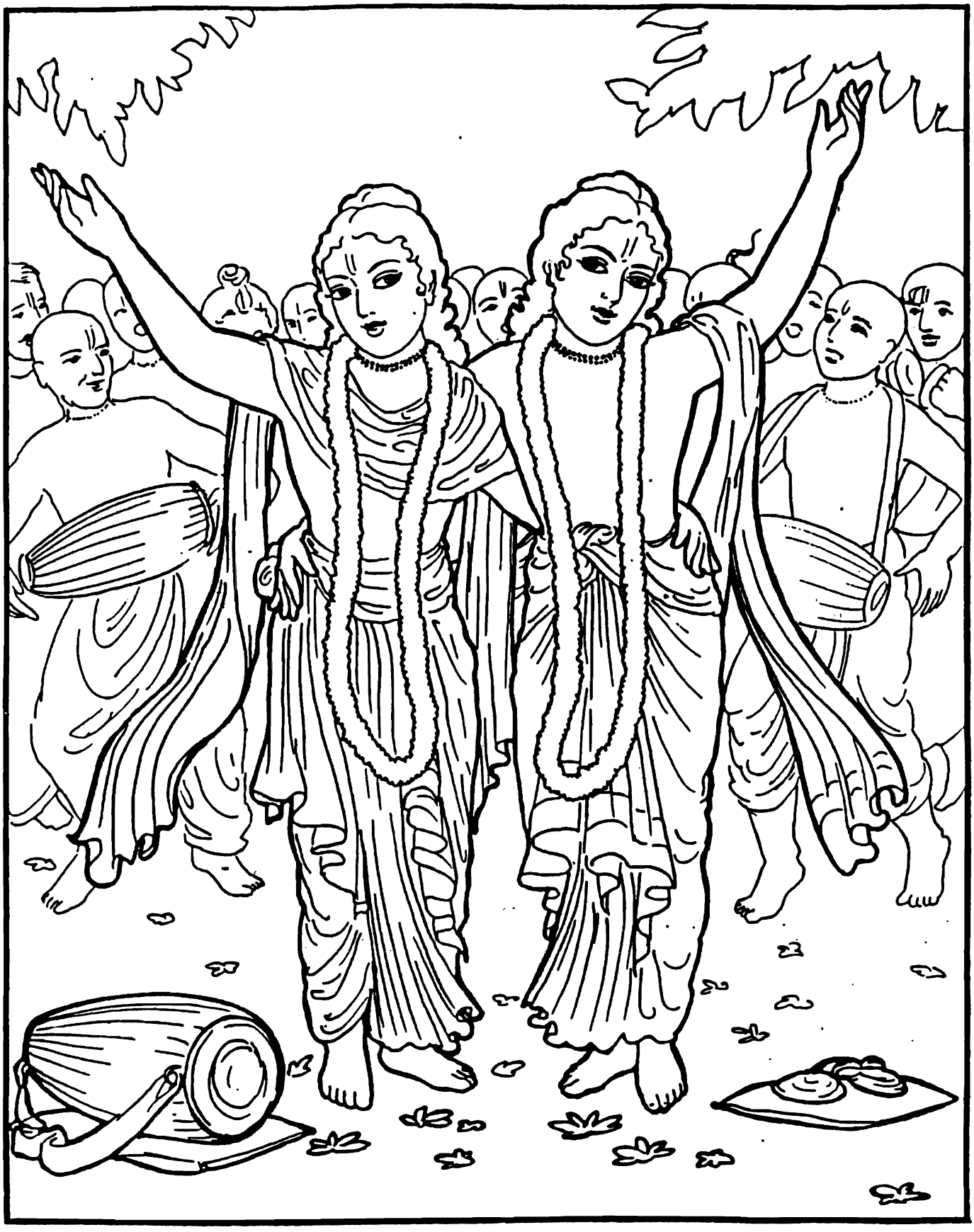
Founder Acharya: A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

# Introduction

Everyone likes to celebrate. In all cultures of the world, you will find many festivals observing different important events. Some have to do with nature, some with the changing seasons, some for different stages a child will pass through, some for religious reasons and many other purposes. People seem to find a way to celebrate almost anything!

In Krishna Consciousness, there is no shortage of festivals. Many festivals and parties center around a particular person. A person having a birthday is the center of a birthday party. A new graduate is the center of a graduation party. With spiritual festivals, God is in the center. Krishna is unlimited and He has unlimited pastimes, all of which are good cause for celebration.

In this session we will experience a few of our well-known festivals. These are festivals that some of you may have attended in India. We will learn the story behind each festival and why it is observed. We will make all the necessary preparations for it and together enjoy the fun of India's spiritual holidays.



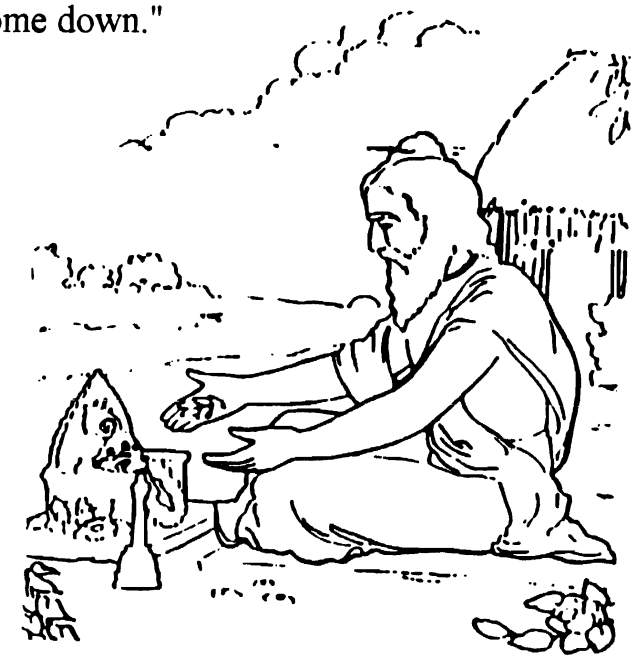
# Gaura Purnima
## The Appearance Day of Lord Chaitanya

Advaita Acharya was a great devotee of Krishna. He was an incarnation of Lord Brahma and Maha Vishnu. When Krishna comes to this earth, He comes with His friends and relatives. Some of the demigods also come. This was true of Adwaita Acharya, too. In this way, Krishna is always with His devotees.

Advaita Acharya noticed that hardly anyone was chanting Hare Krishna or serving Krishna. Everyone seemed to be busy doing many sinful things. He saw that the people were not interested in devotional service. He felt very sorry for them and wanted to help them all go back to Krishna somehow.

He thought, "If Krishna Himself were to come and show everyone how to be Krishna conscious, then I'm sure everyone will listen. The only way to go back home, back to Godhead, in this age is to chant Hare Krishna. If Lord Krishna appeared and taught this chanting--***HARE KRISHNA, HARE KRISHNA, KRISHNA KRISHNA, HARE HARE, HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA, RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE***--then everyone would chant. So, I'll ask Lord Krishna Himself to come down."

Calling loudly to Lord Krishna, Advaita Acharya offered tulasi leaves and Ganges water to his Deity in order to please the Lord.



"My dear Lord, please come down!" he cried. So, at the request of Advaita Acharya, Lord Chaitanya appeared.

When Lord Chaitanya was born, there was an eclipse of the moon. That is considered to be an inauspicious event. Many, many people would

chant and take their baths in holy rivers to protect themselves from the bad luck of the lunar eclipse.

All the devotees went down to the Ganges to take their bath during the eclipse. At that time all the people were chanting "Hari! Hari! Haribol! Hare Krishna!" Some, who had never once uttered the Lord's name, now chanted on their way to the Ganga. That is the only sound that could be heard in the entire universe. In heaven, the demigods were dancing and playing musical instruments. They showered flowers amid shouts of, "Jaya! Jaya!" Everyone was full of joy.

It was during this time, when the sound of the Lord's name was on the lips of all, that Lord Chaitanya appeared in Navadwip. Advaita Acharya could guess that the Lord had appeared and he also began to chant and dance. The Lord had come!

In the house of Jagannatha Mishra, everyone was full of bliss. His wife, Sachi had just given birth to a beautiful baby boy. As the sound of chanting was heard in every direction, the Supreme Lord smiled to Himself as He made His appearance. The newborn child shone like gold and His little body was perfect in every way.

Many people came to see the child and were amazed at the brilliance of His body. Some knew that He was the Supreme Lord, Krishna, who had come in a golden form. In fact, Sri Chaitanya is Krishna Himself, but He is a golden color instead of blue. That is why He is sometimes called Gauranga. Because He was born under a neem tree, He is also called Nimai.

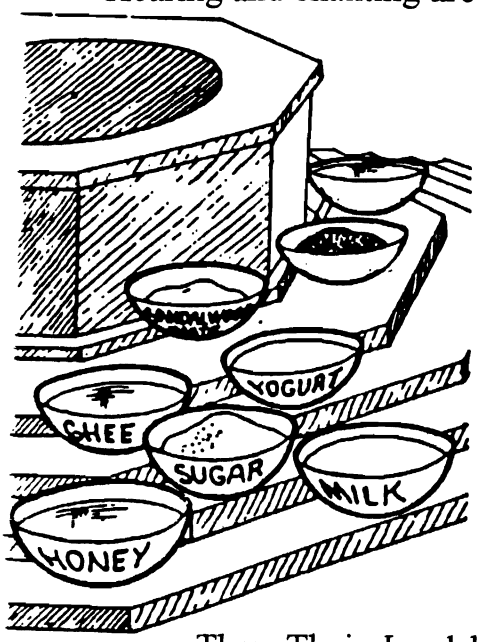
The Lord never appears alone. He always comes with His associates. Many of the demigods took their birth in the world before Lord Chaitanya appeared so they could have pastimes with Him. When He appeared, many more demigods came to Mother Sachi's house to see the beautiful baby. It was very dark during the eclipse and, in the darkness, no humans saw the devas who fell to the ground offering obeisances to Lord Chaitanya.

Some recited prayers of glorification, others held the umbrella, some fanned Him with a chamara, while others showered flowers in ecstasy, singing and dancing. They used the excuse of the eclipse to continue the chanting of "Hari! Hari!"

In the town of Navadwip, 500 years ago, Lord Chaitanya appeared to establish the *yuga dharma*, or duty, for this age. He came to spread the chanting of ***HARE KRISHNA, HARE KRISHNA, KRISHNA KRISHNA, HARE HARE, HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA, RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE.*** Gaura Purnima is the celebration of the appearance of Lord Chaitanya.

## Celebrating Gaura Purnima

The festival of Gaura Purnima is celebrated in the evening, since Lord Chaitanya appeared at moonrise. As in all festivals, the temple room is nicely cleaned and decorated. Whenever possible, a new dress is offered to the temple Deities along with beautiful, fresh garlands of flowers. On Gaura Purnima day, devotees gather to hear the pastimes of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Hearing and chanting are important activities in any spiritual celebration.




Deitites of Lord Chaitanya and Lord Nityananda are placed in the temple and an *abhishek* (bathing ceremony) is performed. The Deities are bathed with milk, pure water, ghee, honey and yogurt.

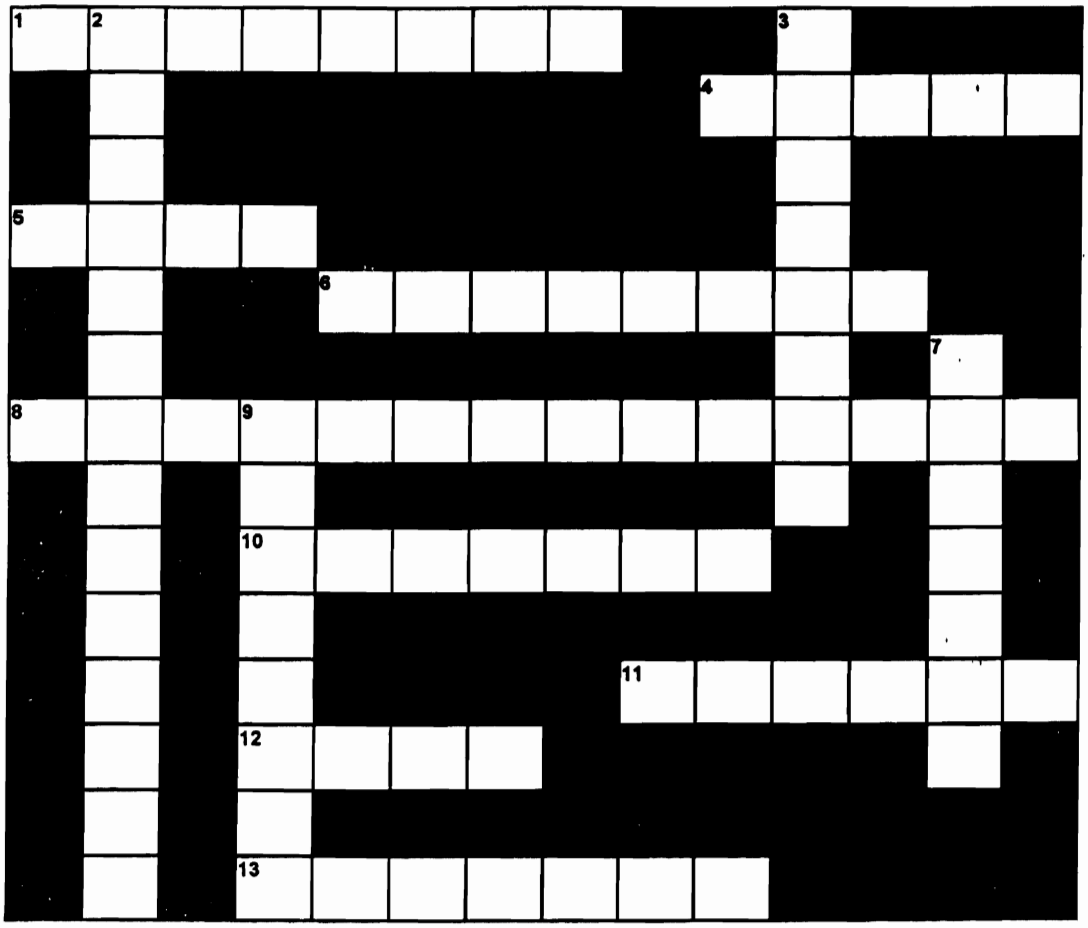
After bathing, the Deities are dressed in Their new clothes with new garlands. They are offered arati while the devotees participate in a big kirtan with everyone dancing. Special songs glorifying Lord Gauranga are sung.

Then Their Lordships are presented with many new gifts for Their pleasure. By now, everyone is very hungry since they have been fasting all day. At moonrise, a big feast is served. Many temples cook at least 108 preparations.

## Our Sunday School Celebration of Gaura Purnima

**My duties:** _____

# Gaura Purnima Crossword Puzzle



## Across

1. name for Nimai
4. Nimai's mother
5. Yuga Nimai came in
6. came to see Nimai
8. Nimai's father
10. heard during eclipse
11. offered in arati
12. _____ Krishna!
13. all-attractive One

## Down

2. asked Lord to come
3. Nimai was born here
7. Visvarupa to Nimai
9. bathing ceremony

# Govardhan Puja

The cowherd men of Vrindavan once prepared a nice sacrifice for Lord Indra. At that time the child Krishna approached His father and asked, "My dear Father, who is this sacrifice meant for? Why are you holding it? Please tell Me everything about the sacrifice."

"My dear son," said Nanda Maharaja, "the rainfall is very important for our lives. We cannot farm without rainfall. So we must repay the person who gives us the rain. That person is Lord Indra."

Krishna replied, "But Father, there is no need to worship the demigods for material results. Any mercy that is given from the demigods really comes from the Supreme Lord Vishnu. There is no need for you to worship Lord Indra. I beg you to begin a sacrifice for the satisfaction of the local brahmans and Govardhan Hill. Let us have nothing to do with Indra.

"We can hold the sacrifice like this: First prepare nice foodstuffs from ghee and grains. Ask all the brahmans to come and take part. We will chant Vedic hymns and offer grains to the brahmans.

"Then decorate the cows and feed them well. After this you may give prasadam to the dogs and other animals. Give nice grass to the cows. In this way we can begin Govardhan Puja."

Following the orders of the boy Krishna, everyone fed and decorated his cows. Keeping the cows in front, they began to walk around Govardhan Hill.

Krishna was more than pleased with the Govardhan Puja. In His happiness He began to eat all the foodstuffs offered in the sacrifice. He said, "Govardhan Hill and I are non-different. Anyone who does not worship Govardhan Hill will be bitten by all of the snakes on the hill."

Therefore, all of the cowherd men worshipped Govardhan Hill and the local brahmans every year for the good fortune of the cows.

All of the residents of Vrindavan were happy when they held the Govardhan Puja. The cows and brahmans were satisfied and the cowherd men and women felt very peaceful. Only Lord Indra was unhappy because of the sacrifice. Being very puffed-up, Lord Indra could not understand why the residents of Vrindavan were not worshipping him. He became overly angry and wanted to destroy all of Vrindavan with a mighty flood.

Lord Indra said, "These cowherd men have neglected me on the orders of this talkative boy Krishna, who is nothing but a child. By believing Him, they have made me very angry! They must all be destroyed along with their cows!"

Ordered by Lord Indra, a sky full of dark and frightening clouds appeared over Vrindavan. They began to pour down rain with all their strength and power. There was constant lightning and thunder, a strong wind, and constant rain that fell like sharp arrows. The clouds poured water as thick as pillars and soon the land of Vrindavan was flooded.

Being cold and frightened, the animals and the people in Vrindavan took shelter of their dear friend Govinda. Even the cows took their calves and went to the lotus feet of Lord Krishna.

They all said, "Dear Krishna, You are all-powerful and You are very kind to Your devotees. Please protect us from the wrath of Indra."

Krishna wanted to teach Lord Indra a good lesson. He also wanted to protect the devotees. So, without waiting, He picked up Govardhan Hill with one hand, just as a child picks up a mushroom from the ground.

"My dear brother, My dear father, My dear residents of Vrindavan, you can now safely enter under the umbrella of Govardhan Hill which I have just lifted. Do not be afraid of the hill and think that it will fall from My hand. You have been frightened because of the heavy rain and the strong wind; therefore, I have lifted this hill to protect you just like a huge umbrella. Bring your animals and be happy under this umbrella."

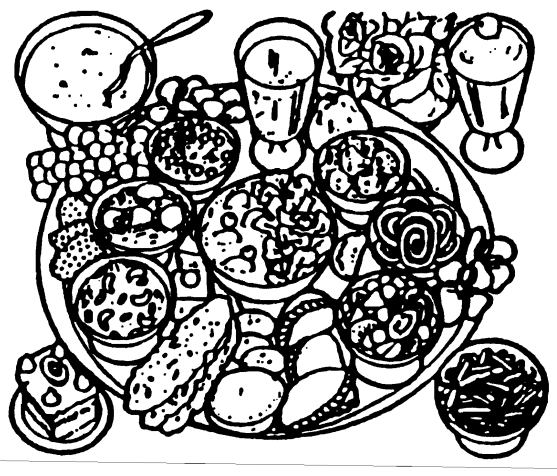
The residents of Vrindavan stayed under Krishna's umbrella for seven days without feeling any hunger or thirst. They were all surprised to see how Krishna could hold up the mountain with the little finger of His left hand.

Lord Indra was also surprised. He called for all the clouds and asked them to stop raining. When the sky was clear and the sun was shining, Krishna said, "My dear cowherd men, now you can leave because everything is ended. Please take your wives, children, cows and wealth. You may all go."

When everything was cleared, Krishna slowly replaced Govardhan Hill just as it had been before. At that time all of the Vrindavan residents approached Krishna and began to offer Him nice prayers. They all embraced Him and blessed Him over and over again. The demigods poured showers of flowers on the earth and sounded many different conchshells. Along with His friends and the cows, Krishna returned peacefully to His home in Vrindavan.

## Celebrating Govardhan Puja

For Govardhan Puja and Annakuta, a large amount of food is cooked and offered to the Lord. Many different preparations are cooked and placed before the deities, thereby giving them a "mountain of food".



A hill representing Govardhan is constructed out of rice or halavah. It is decorated with different foodstuffs, making the hill look like it has trees, lakes, flower gardens, and animals on it. Arati is performed to the hill (Krishna said, "I am Govardhan Hill!") while everyone circles it, chanting and dancing. After the hill has been worshipped, prasadam is distributed.

Go Puja, or worship of the cow, may also be performed on that day. The residents of Vrindavan were very thankful for their cows who provided so many necessities. The cows' milk is made into butter, yogurt, ghee and buttermilk; the cow dung is used for fuel and the urine is antiseptic. All these products of the cow are used in sacrifices, too. The bull is trained to plow the fields and do other types of heavy work. The Vrajavasis wanted to show their gratitude to the cows and bulls. A cow is nicely decorated and arati is offered to her. Afterwards, she is fed delicious prasadam.

## Our Sunday School Celebration of Govardhan Puja

**My duties:**

# Prasadam Word Search

Govardhan Puja is a celebration with all kinds of prasadam being offered to the Lord. Can you find the hidden names of the different food from the list below that would be offered to Krishna on this day?

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

PURI
DAHL
RICE
MILK
CURD

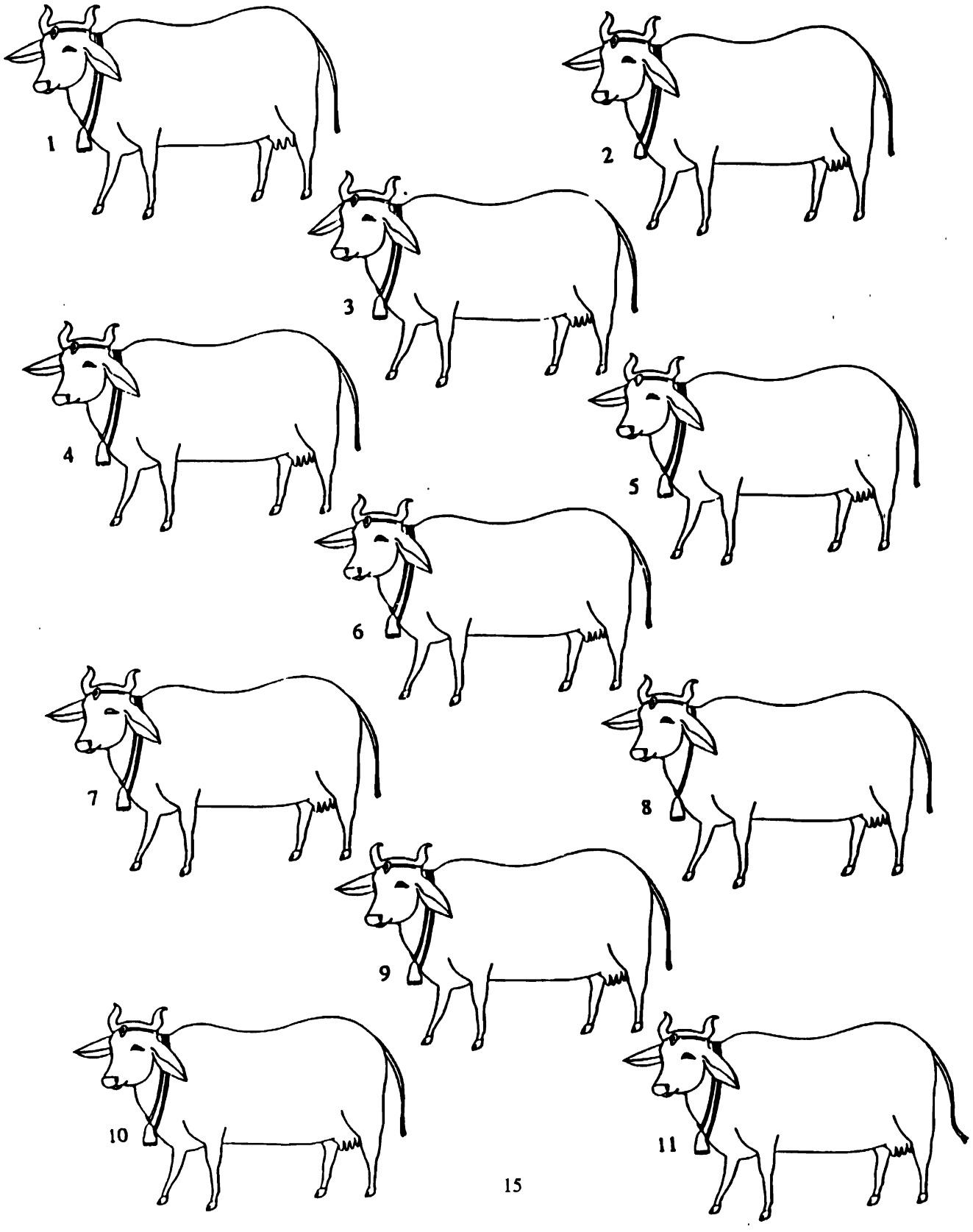
CHAPATI
CHUTNEY
PAKORA
HALAVA
SAMOSA

FRUIT
BURFI
PERA
SABJI
NECTAR

POPPER
LADDHU
SANDESH
SWEET RICE
GULABJAMUN

# Compare the cows of Govardhan Hill

Only two cows are identical. Which two are they?
Circle the differences in each of the others.



Rāma kills Rāvaṇa.

# Vijay Dashmi or Dasera
## Rama's Victory over Ravana

Most of you probably have read the glorious pastimes of Lord Ramachandra. He appeared as the eldest son of Maharaj Dasaratha. When He grew up, His father wanted to crown Him as the next king. However, His stepmother, Kaikeyi, became envious that her son, Bharat, was not being made the king. She conspired with her maidservant, Kubda, and forced Maharaj Dasaratha to enthrone Bharat as the king instead of Lord Rama. As if that was not enough, she further got the king to banish Rama to the forest for a period of 14 years.

Being an obedient son, Lord Ramachandra happily accepted the order and left for the forest. His wife, Sita, and His younger brother, Lakshman, pleaded with Him to allow them to accompany Him. The benevolent Lord accepted their request.

For almost 13 years the three wandered in various forests visiting the hermitages of many sages. They also defeated many demons. One of theme was Shurpanakha, a demoness and the sister of a very cruel demon named Ravana. To teach her a lesson, Lakshman cut off her nose with his sword. She was infuriated and rushed back to complain to her brother, Ravana.

To avenge the insult to his sister, Ravana played a trick on Rama and captured Mother Sita while Rama and Lakshman were away. They were

trying to catch a golden deer who was actually a demon sent by Ravana to lure away the brothers.

Ravana took Mother Sita to his kingdom in Lanka. Even though Lord Rama could have easily defeated Ravana and his entire army, He didn't do it. In order to allow His devotees to be able to serve Him, He engaged the king of monkeys, Sugriva, and his army to to help Him. To reach Lanka they had to cross the ocean, so the monkeys were busy in building a bridge across the water.

After many trials and adventures, they reached Lanka. There was intense fighting for almost a year. Many great soldiers from Ravana's armies were killed. Finally, when no one was left, Ravana came to the battlefield himself. Being a demon, he did not realize the position of Lord Ramachandra, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.

Ravana was envious of the Lord and was very proud of his own strength. He thought he could defeat Lord Rama. He challenged Him to a fight. However, Lord Ramachandra easily defeated the demon and killed him.

With the death of Ravana, the denizens of all the 3 planetary systems became very happy. They danced and sang the glories of Lord Rama and showered heavenly flowers upon Him. The Lord then took Mother Sita and proceeded back to Ayodhya. The 14 years of exile were over and Ayodhya was now Lord Rama's kingdom.

The day when Lord Ramachandra killed Ravana is celebrated all over India as "Vijaya dashmi". "Vijay" means victory. So this is the victory day of good over evil, of righteousness over sin, of saints over demons.

## Celebrating Vijay Dashmi

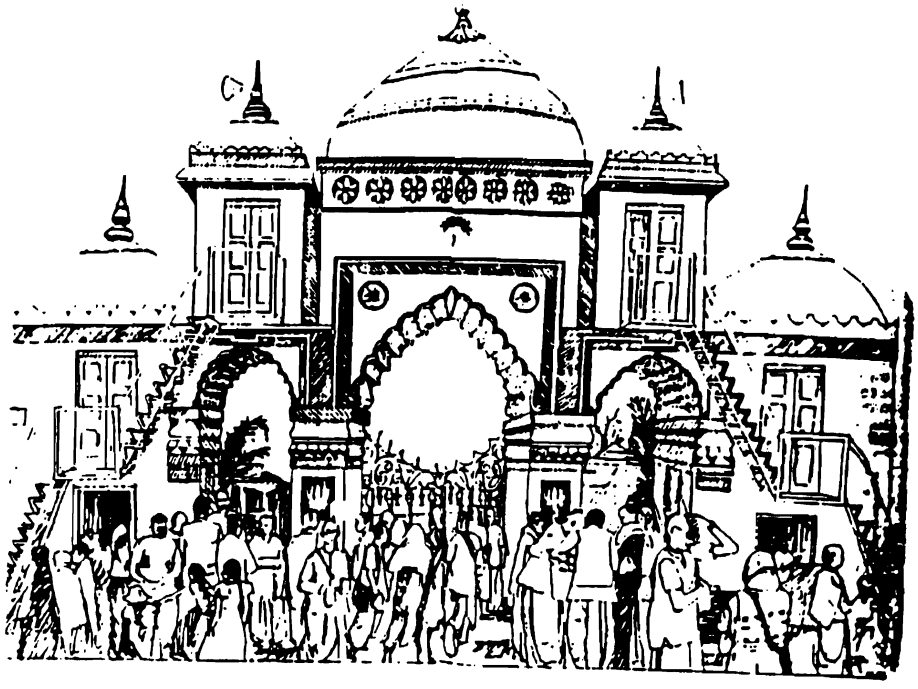
About 10 days before Vijay dashmi, in all parts of India, the local drama groups begin enacting Lord Ramachandra's pastimes. The dramas are staged every evening and all people, young and old, assemble to see Rama with great enthusiasm. These dramas are called "Rama-lila," or the pastimes of Lord Ramachandra.

On the Vijay dashmi day, the tenth day, huge effigies of Ravana and his brother Kumbhakarana and his son Meghanada are burnt. These effigies may be as high as 100 feet or more and are filled with huge quantities of firecrackers. In the evening everyone gathers to watch this last part of Rama-lila.

At dusk, when the sun is about to set, Lord Rama sets Ravana, Kumbhakarana and Meghanada on fire. This is a moment of great excitement as the three demons explode into flames. The devotees become very happy to witness the victory of their beloved Lord Rama.

After this everyone goes to the temples and prays to the Lord that, just as He killed Ravana, He may also vanquish all the bad qualities that we have. Our sinful nature is like a demon as it prevents us from surrendering to the Lord and becoming His devotee.

It took Lord Rama and His entourage 20 days to reach Ayodhya from Lanka. The day He entered Ayodhya with Mother Sita and Lakshman is celebrated as Diwali. This is also a very major festival in India. That will be the next festival we celebrate.



## Our Sunday School Celebration of Vijay Dasami

**My duties:**

## The Evil Demon Ravana

If you could choose ten words to describe Ravana, what words would you choose? Write one word on each of Ravana's ten heads.

# Diwali
# The New Year

Diwali is one of the oldest festivals celebrated in India. It falls in the month of Karttika (October-November). The word "Diwali" comes from the Sanskrit word "dipavali," which means "a row of lights."

Diwali is celebrated 20 days after Vijay Dashmi. This special day marks the return of Prince Rama from His exile and His coronation as the King of Ayodhya.

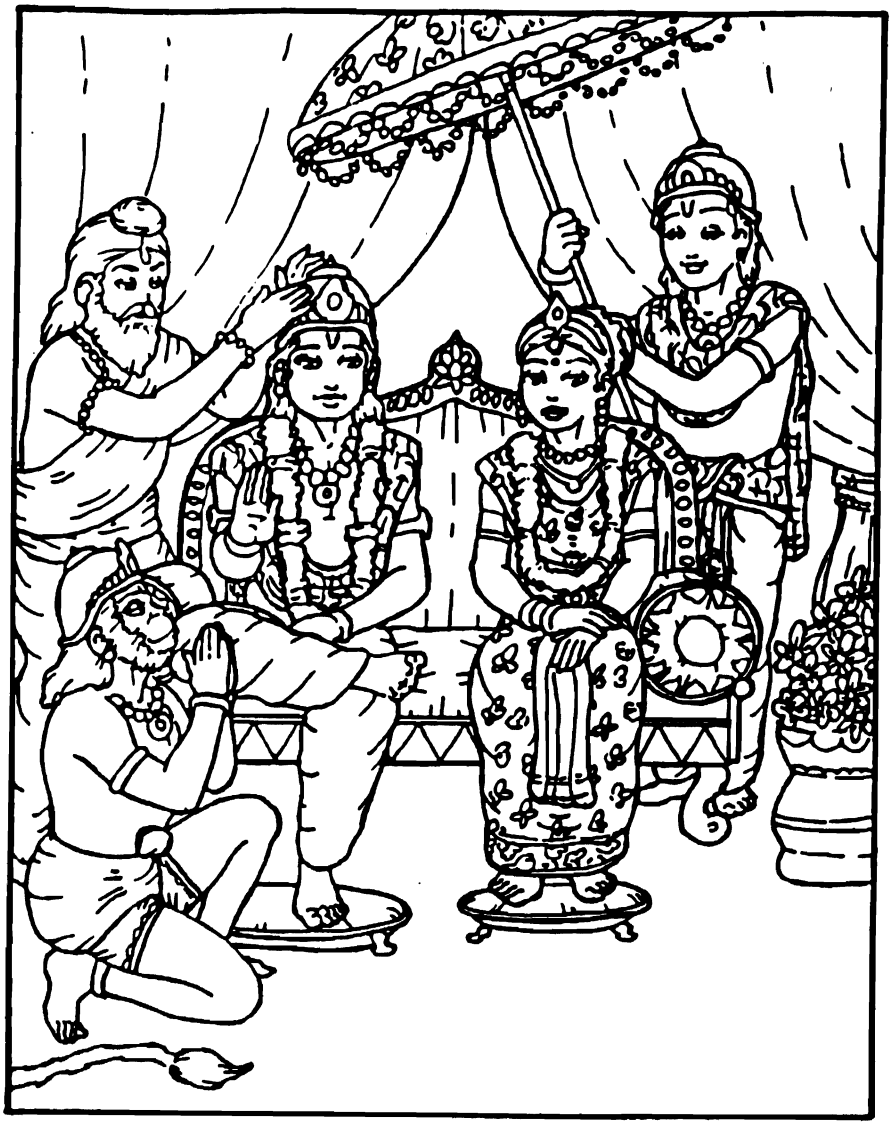
As you read in the last chapter, Rama killed Ravana and rescued His beloved wife, Sita. After this, He enthroned Vibhisan, the younger brother of Ravanan, as the king of Lanka. Vibhisan was a great devotee of Lord Rama. Then the Lord boarded the *puspak vivan* (a flower airplane) along with Sita, Laksman, Hanuman and His other associates. On the way back to Ayodhya, He stopped at various places seeking blessings from great saints and meeting all the friends and devotees who had served Him during the 14 years He had spent in the forest.

The news of His upcoming arrival soon reached Ayodhya. The residents were filled with feelings of unbounded joy. After 14 long, painful years of separation they were finally going to see their blessed Lord.

Rama's brothers, Bharat and Shatrughna, were overjoyed at the news of Rama's return. They quickly prepared for His homecoming. the city was decorated with flowers, garlands and perfumed water. Singers and musicians were asked to prepare themselves for the morning when Rama would arrive. The road into Ayodhya was made level so the army and the citizens could march out to greet Him. Millions of flowers were on hand so that Rama's path could be covered with petals. Colored pwoder was traced into beautiful intricat patterns to beautify the royal path.

As Lord Ramachandra arrived, Bharat and Shatrughna went to great Him. They washed His lotus feet, seated Him and Sitadevi on an opulently decorated chariot and took Him to the palace in a stately procession. All the citizens were in ecstasy seeing the Lord. Ladies stood in the balconies of

their houses and showered flowers as the procession passed through. The same day, the Lord was enthroned as the emperor of Ayodhya.



Coronation of Rāma.

In the evening there was a great celebration. Because it was the new moon day, the residents of Ayodhya lit millions of ghee lamps all over the city. the houses looked like newly wed brides wearing shimmering necklaces of beautifully decorated lamps. There was great festivity with singing and dancing, displays of fireworks ans sumptuous feasts.

To this day, Diwali is celebrated with the same joy and fervor. It is especially known for beautiful ghee lamps that are lit all around the houses and temples.

## Celebrating Diwali

People in certain parts of India see Diwali as the beginning of the year. To prepare for this, they clean their houses from ceiling to floor. Lots of sweets are made to give as gifts to friends and relatives. In villages, old clay lamps are thrown out and replaced with brand new ones.

The businessmen close their shops and take the day off. They also close their accounts for the year on Diwali. In the evening, everyone worships Goddess Laxmi for good fortune. All night, lamps are kept burning in the spotlessly clean homes awaiting the Goddess' visit.

The children have so much fun when Diwali time rolls around. They light the lamps and play with firecrackers. They visit the neighboring houses to see the beautiful display of lights. On Diwali night, the shining and flickering lights make one feel like he is in heaven. That night the lamps certainly make the earth look even brighter than the heavens above!

The day of Diwali is filled with activities for both adults and children. The whole family participates in cleaning every room of the house thoroughly. The children decorate the entrances, covering the doors with writings of "Sita-Rama, Sita-Rama, Sita-Rama". Using colored sand, intricate designs are drawn on the floor of the entrances of the house.

The women are busy cooking tasty preparations that will be offered to Goddess Laxmi later that evening. Puris, kachories, samosas and halavah are just a few of the dishes cooked. Many different varieties of sweets have been made especially for this day.

Small clay lamps are purchased for both home and temple. After dressing in new clothes and applying tilak, many families go to the temple

taking lamps to be lit there. At home, the lamps are placed throughout the house. Rows of lights are made in front of the home and some even put rows of lamps on the roof.

Families will visit each other, exchanging sweets and gifts and viewing each other's beautiful display of lights. Children particularly like this holiday because it is customary for them to receive money and gifts.

In the evening, with the flames flickering inside and out, the family worships Laxmi devi. She is offered the delicious array of food that was prepared and arati is performed. A special box may be filled with sweets and left on the altar overnight for the Deities. There are certain traditional bhajans that are sung and everyone enjoys the festive mood.

## Our Sunday School Celebration of Diwali

**My duties:**

# Lord Rama's Wonderful Qualities

In the puzzle below, see if you can find 11 qualities of Lord Rama. The words are listed up, down and across (not diagonally). Write the words on the lines below as you discover them.

H E L P F U L C

U F O E R C O L

M A V A I H G E

B B I C E E E A

L R N E N E N N

E I G F D R T D

I F H U L F L A

O M L L Y U E A

K I N D E L M H

T R U T H F U L

E S I W R R I D

D H Ā R M I C H

*Unscramble the following words to find things you will see on Diwali.*

| | |
|---|---|
| ESACERRKCRIF | _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ |
| ESTWES | _ _ _ _ _ _ |
| IARTA | _ _ _ _ _ |
| SITHGL | _ _ _ _ _ _ |
| SMLPA | _ _ _ _ _ |
| TFSIG | _ _ _ _ _ |
| XMALI | _ _ _ _ _ |

*Match by drawing lines.*

## Rama-lila

| | |
|---|---|
| Bharat | Ravana's younger brother |
| Dasaratha | Celebrates Rama killing Ravana |
| Diwali | Ramachandra's wife |
| Laksmana | A monkey warrior |
| Ravana | Ravana's demon sister |
| Shurparnakha | A demon who captured Sita |
| Sita | Rama's father |
| Sugriva | One of Rama's brothers |
| Vibhisan | Celebrates Rama returning to Ayodhya |
| Vijay Dashmi | Rama's brother who ruled Ayodhya |

## Ratha Yatra

# FESTIVAL of the CHARIOTS

Lord Chaitanya spent the last 18 years of His life in Jagannatha Puri. He would go daily to the Jagannatha Temple to have darshan of Lord Jagannatha.. Once a year Ratha Yatra, or the Festival of the Chariots, is celebrated in Puri. "Ratha" means chariot and "yatra" means festival. In that festival, Lord Jagannatha, His brother Balaram and His sister Subhadra are placed on a huge decorated cart and pulled by devotees on a parade down the main street. Year after year, Lord Chaitanya took part in the Ratha Yatra festival.

### Why pull the Deities on a cart?

When Krishna and Balaram lived in Vrindavan, Their uncle Akrura, on King Kamsa's order, came to take Them to Mathura. That day was the worst day for Radharani. The gopis and the Vrajavasis (the residents of Vrindavan) also hated that very day. They felt as if their life would end if Krishna and Balaram left them. Krishna promised them that He would return after killing the demons outside of Vrindavan. But Krishna stayed in Mathura for some time and then moved to Dwarka. The gopis and Radharani felt unbearable separation from Krishna during these years.

Later, Nanda Maharaj, Radharani and the Vrajavasis heard of Krishna's plan to visit Kurukshetra. This wasn't far from Vrindavan so they planned to meet Him there.

When everyone arrived at Kurukshetra, the residents of Dwarka set up their royal camp and nearby the Vrajavasis parked their simple carts. Both groups met together, enjoying each other's company.

Of course, everyone was overjoyed to meet Krishna, the Lord of their life. But they were used to seeing Him as a simple cowherd boy, not as a royal prince. It was different seeing Him here in Kurukshetra. They wanted Him to come back to Vrindavan.

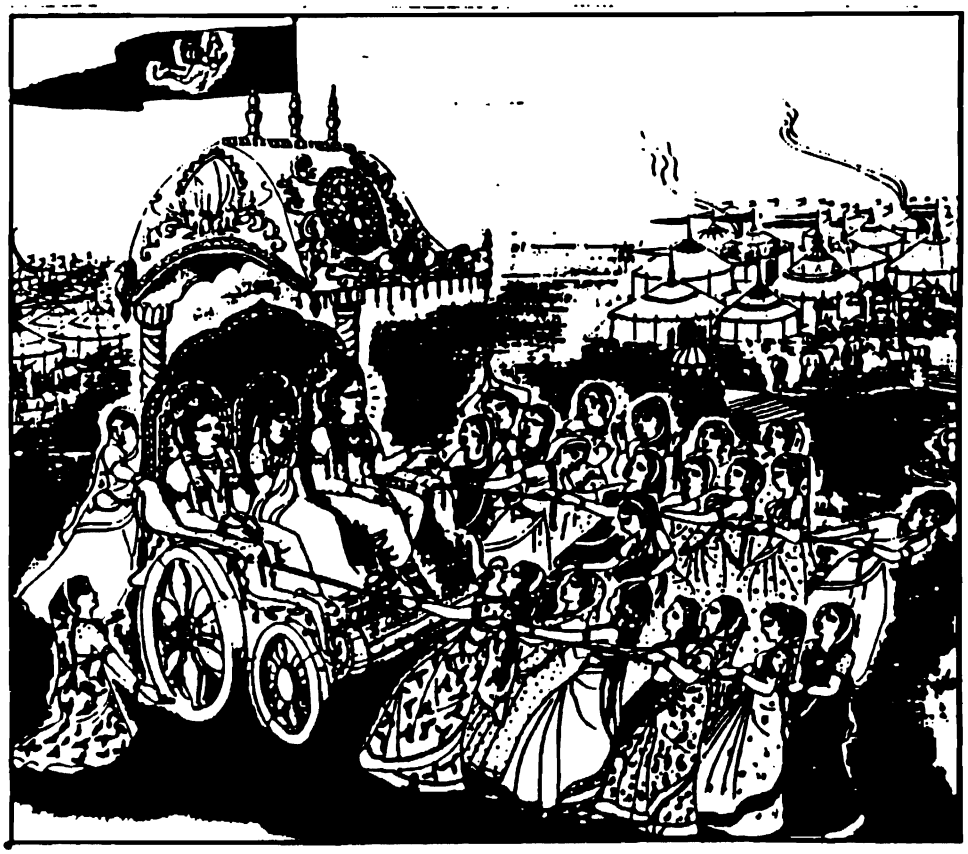
When Radha had a chance to meet Krishna, She told Him how She felt. "You are the same Krishna and I am the same Radha. We're meeting again in the same way that we met in the beginning of our lives. Although it's the same, my mind is still attracted to Vrindavan. I wish that You would please again appear with Your lotus feet in Vrindavan.

"Kurukshetra is crowded with people, elephants, horses and noisy with the rattling of chariots. But in Vrindavan, there are flower gardens where the humming of the bees and the chirping of the birds can be heard. Here at Kurukshetra You are dressed like a royal prince, but in Vrindavan you appear just like an ordinary cowherd boy.

"Here I don't even feel a drop of the ocean of transcendental happiness that I enjoyed with You in Vrindavan. Please come to Vrindavan and enjoy pastimes with me. That will fulfill all my desires."

Hearing Her, Krishna felt disturbed. He said, "Dear Radha, please hear Me. I'm speaking the truth. I cry day and night simply remembering all of you inhabitants of Vrindavan. No one knows how unhappy this makes Me! It is My great misfortune to be separated from all of you."

Due to the gopi's great desire to have Krishna back with them in Vrindavan, they tried to convince Him. They gathered around Him and, taking the ropes in their hands, they began to pull His chariot as if they were going to pull Him all the way to Vrindavan. Once again, Krishna promised them He would return.



The pulling of the Ratha Yatra cart symbolizes the gopis' efforts to pull Krishna and His brother and sister back to Vrindavan.

## How Lord Jagannatha came to Puri

A few thousand years ago, there lived a great devotee king named Indradyumna Maharaj. He wished to have Deities made so he could worship Them.

Visvakarma, the architect of the demigods, agreed to carve the Deities of Lord Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra. His only condition was that he be allowed to work in private. If he was interrupted, he would not complete his work.

Indradyumna Maharaj agreed but after a few days he couldn't hear any sound of work coming from Visvakarma's room. He became worried and impatient and he broke into the room. Visvakarma disappeared leaving behind the unfinished deities.

The king felt terrible! What had he done? How could these unfinished, crude deities be worshipped? Indradyumna Maharaj began to cry and practically fainted from grief. But then the Lord spoke to the devoted king. He told the king that He had come in this form to fulfill the Vedic statement that "although He is without arms and legs, He accepts the offerings of His devotees."

Narada Muni then appeared at the king's palace. He told him that Lord Krishna had appeared in this form once before -- at Kurukshetra. Hearing this, the king accepted Lord Jagannatha as his worshipable Lord. He knew now that this form of the Lord was not an accident. Since then, these forms of the Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra have been worshipped in Puri.

## Why do the Deities look different?

Narada Muni said Lord Krishna appeared like this, but usually Krishna is seen in a human-like form playing the flute. How could Krishna, Balaram and Subhadra look so different?

In Kurukshetra, when the residents of Vrindavan and the residents of Dwarka were visiting, a very special pastime took place. Rohini, the mother of Balaram, met with a big group of the Dwarka residents. She wanted to tell them how much suffering the Vrindavan people were going through. They missed Krishna so much they hardly felt like living anymore.

Before Rohini started to tell them, she had Subhadra stand at the door of the tent. She instructed Subhadra, "If Krishna or Balaram comes here, don't let Them in." She knew They would feel very sad at hearing of the Vrajavasis' suffering.

Krishna and Balaram *did* come and Subhadra stopped Them from going inside the tent. But They stood by the door and listened and heard Rohini telling everything. As They listened, They became stunned, forgetting everything but Their thoughts of Radharani, the gopis and the other residents of Vrindavan. They knew how everyone missed Them but They had never heard it from a Vrajavasi. They were simply astounded. Their eyes grew bigger and bigger in amazement and Their arms, legs and necks withdrew into Their bodies. They looked exactly like the Deities now worshipped at Puri. That is why the Deities have an unusual appearance.

## Celebrating Ratha Yatra

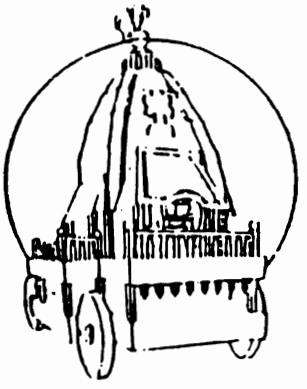
One week before the cart festival is celebrated, another festival called Snana Yatra is celebrated. The Deities are bathed during that festival but something unexpected happens. Lord Jagannath, Lady Subhadra and Lord Balaram catch a cold.

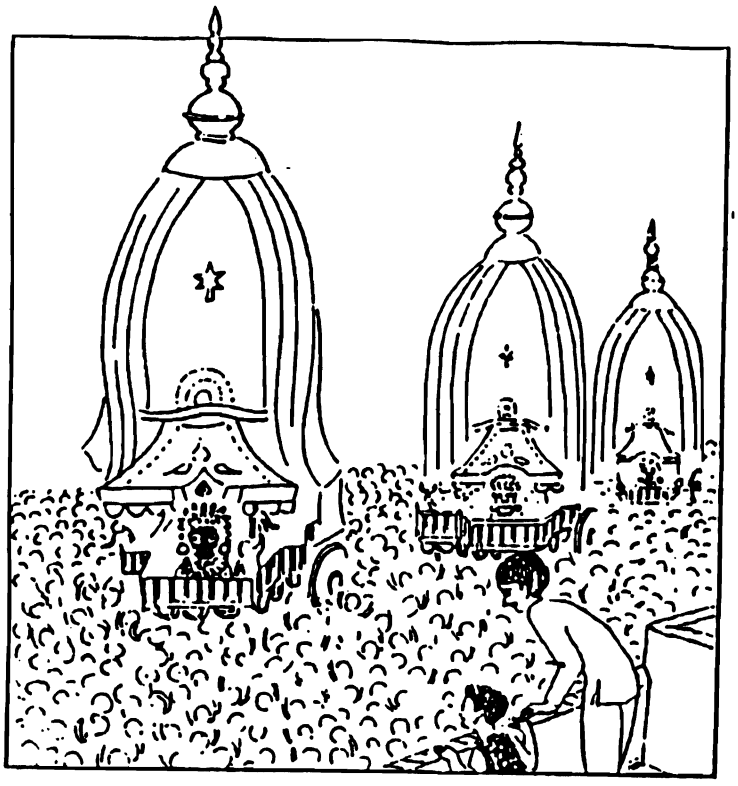
Because They are sick, They are taken to a special private room. Only the pujari is allowed to attend Them and no one may come into their room for darshan. Special foodstuffs are prepared for Them. Fruit juices, hot herbal teas, hot soups, and other healthy foods that are good for illnesses are offered to the Deities. They stay in Their room recovering from Their colds for one week.

In the meantime, the temple room is cleaned from top to bottom. Not a corner is left untouched as all the devotees of the Lord wash and scrub the temple. Lord Chaitanya observed this tradition with His disciples. Together they cleansed the temple where Lord Jagannatha was about to arrive. But the devotees were only allowed to say, "Krishna, Krishna." They couldn't say, "Please pass the water bucket." They could only say, "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna."

After being secluded for a week, Lord Jagannatha, His brother and sister are anxious to go outside to get some fresh air and a change of scenery. The devotees then prepare to take Them on a procession.

On the actual day of Ratha Yatra, the Deities are gorgeously dressed in new clothes. A large cart, or sometimes three separate carts, are beautifully decorated. Their Lordships, Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra, are brought out of their private room while a big kirtan greets Them. Everyone is happy to see Them again after missing Them for one full week. The pujaris place Them on the cart and attend Them by fanning Them and offering Them delicious food. During the parade, the cart is stopped every now and then and people bring forward different items that they have prepared for Jagannatha. In this way, offerings are made all along the way.





The cart is then pulled by the people on a procession through the streets. Melodious kirtans are constantly being sung and everyone takes part enthusiastically in the chanting and dancing. Sometimes the cart stops and even goes backwards, so the devotees must pull very hard to keep the ratha cart moving forward. Prasadam is distributed to the crowd by devotees throwing it from the cart. The crowd jumps and lunges to receive Lord Jagannatha's mercy.

When the cart reaches its destination, the Deities are taken back into the temple and placed on the altar amidst a rousing kirtan.

**Follow the coloring chart at the bottom of the page and see what picture you create.**