

Week 1

Hari Om Parents!

Welcome to 1st Grade Balavihar, we had a great start to week 1. It was nice to see all of the new and excited faces ready to begin the year & we were really very happy to see all of those familiar faces return for another wonderful year of learning!

Class started with brief introductions of the kids and the teachers.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakratunda mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)

We gave a brief explanation of why we chant these shlokas. Many of the kids were excited to tell us about Lord Ganesha! It was nice to hear them share their tales.

Activites:

1. In the middle of our story we decided to take a brain break & to do some yoga stretches. We have some trees that can stand straight for a while, but for the most part we have a wobbly forest. We hope to strengthen our trees by the end of the year!
2. Question of the day: We try to give a minute during class for kids to ask questions. Today we had one child ask, "How can we possibly survive without technology mainly my video games and T.V.?" I explained that technology constantly evolves, when I was growing up, the T.V.s looked very different & we had only one channel called Doordarshan with specific programs that came only once a week. The kids jaws dropped! I told them to ask their grandparents about their experiences with electricity & technology when they were growing up & if they knew how their grandparents grew up!

We will be teaching the kids **Bala Ramayanam** this year.

Our goal for this year is to narrate the story of Lord Rama & inspire the kids to be like Rama. We were able to complete chapter 1 & 2 during our class.

We started off by first geographically situating ourselves on the map of India. Determining which is North and that our story will be gradually progressing Southward.

Our story began in Ayodhya. We started off by describing the city, how it was clean, peaceful, with beautiful tree lined streets, buildings that represented that time. The kids

had a hard time relating to the fact that the roads were not tar topped, that there was no electricity, zero technology, no vehicles & walking, horse driven carriages & bullock carts were the primary modes of transportation. No sounds for trains or airplanes or automobiles to disturb the sounds of nature. People sang, danced & played instruments like the mridangam & veena & spoke with each other to keep themselves entertained. We explained how King Dasaratha kept his people & land happy. Leading to the meaning of Ayodhya, “where there is **NO** fight”. King Dashartha had three wives: Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Even though the people of Ayodhya were happy, the king was sad as he had no children to succeed him to rule his kingdom. We discussed about who we would go to when we have a problem. Then described how King Dasaratha went to his Guru, sage Vasistha to solve his problem. Sage Vasistha assured the king that he will be having 4 sons in the future. The kids were asked a question from Kindergarten, most of the kids knew the answer when asked “Y” for...! We paused here for a brain break, but a few kids were ready with the continuation:)

We continued our story with the Putrakameshti Yaga preparation. The city of Ayodhya was in full on decoration and preparation mode. The whole city felt like a royal wedding was about to occur. We discussed about the fire ritual & how a yajna purusa emerged with a bowl of payasam. The yajna purusha told King Dasharatha to give the payasam to his queens & then they will have children. Sumithra was away & both queens Kausalya & Kaikeyi saved half of their payasam bowls to share with Sumitra. Then talked about why Sumitra had twins. Please ask the kids & see if they remember the story.

Required books for Grade 1

1. My Prayers Book
2. Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

We take pictures during class & share them with our class parents, so that you get a feel of what your little ones are up to. If anyone has an issue with that please let us know. If we are asked to share pictures publicly, we will come back to you for separate permission.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week’s class

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See you all next Sunday. Class starts promptly at 9:15 A.M and ends by 10:40 A.M. Kids will then assemble at the prayer hall for Arthi and pledge. This would end by 11:00AM.

We require at least 1 parent inside the ashram during the full duration of the class. You are free to choose an Adult Study Group or sign up to Volunteer or Meditate/Read in the Temple.

Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 2

Dear Parents,
Welcome to week 2 of Balavihar.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakratunda mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om"s kids keep their eyes closed. They listen quietly and count the number of stones being dropped into a metal box, in their mind during this quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game helps with focus and improves concentration. A few of them got it right, most of them were close. They are all eager to get it right the next time!
2. We did some yoga stretches
3. We had an introduction to Sanskrit words & how to pronounce particular letters that we are commonly going to be coming across during Geeta chanting.
4. Question of the Day: We try to give a minute during class for kids to ask questions. Today we had one child ask..."How do you know that all of this actually happened?" I answered saying that, whoever witnessed each incident, made sure that they told/taught their peers, siblings, their kids, their students, their grand kids etc. and that is how the transfer of knowledge happened and all the incidents were captured and then eventually written as books, making it available for all of us to read, understand and retell.

After a brief recap of our story last week, we jumped right in to our lesson. Our setting for this week began in Ayodhya. The story continued with the 4 babies being born, Kausalya had baby Rama, Kaikeyi had baby Bharatha and Sumithra had twins Lakshmana and Shatrughna. The boys started growing up and were taught Vedas, Upanishads, Archery and all that they needed to learn. Rama was identified as everyone's favorite and Rama's talents had no bounds. He seemed to excel at everything! Rama & Lakshmana became close just as Bharata & Shatrughna did with each other. King Dadharatha was overjoyed that he had 4 sons, he was extremely proud of them.

One day an announcement came in, stating that Sage Vishvamitra was on his way to Ayodhya. King Dasharatha immediately offered anything the sage desired. Being a man of his word and one that was true to Dharma, he was shocked to hear sage Vishvamitra's request. We asked the kids how their parents would feel if they were asked to leave to help fight a cause! They came up with different scenarios, leading to how King Dasaratha felt when Rama was summoned. Following Guru Vasistha's advice, the king with a heavy heart, allows Rama along with Laksmana to go with Visvamitra to protect the yajna from demons.

The trio walked on, every time they approached a dark forest, the boys excitedly asked the sage if they *were there yet* to begin slaying demons. Vishvamitra told them to be patient and they would know when they get there. As it got dark, they approached the beautiful Kamashrama along river Saryu. It was such a serene surrounding with lovely trees, fragrant flowers, happy animals and delight. They rested there for the night, woke up in the morning, prayed & then took a raft across the Ganges and came into the **Dandaka** forest. We described the nature of the scary place where Tataka resided in. The sage told the boys that they should not hesitate to fight Tataka as she is female. Rama assured him that they were there to protect good and fight evil. On hearing Rama twang his bow, Tataka started throwing boulders on the puny man. Rama was smart and decided to take out all of her limbs one by one with his bow & arrow. Finally with a thundering thud she dropped onto the ground killing her. Sage Visvamitra embraced him & the devas rejoiced.

We discussed why Tataka & Marica were cursed by sage Agastya to lead ugly lives as demons. So we talked about not doing anything bad or wrong when we are angry. The consequences can be deadly!

We will continue our story next week. Please practice the prayers that we teach the kids, at home. Please ask the kids what they learnt in class.

Required books for Grade 1

3. My Prayers Book
4. Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

We take pictures during class & share them with our class parents, so that you get a feel of what your little ones are up to. If anyone has an issue with that please let us know. If we are asked to share pictures publicly, we will come back to you for separate permission.

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We require at least 1 parent inside the ashram during the full duration of the class. You are free to choose an Adult Study Group or sign up to Volunteer or Meditate/Read in the Temple.

Announcement: The annual CORD walkathon is on October 13, 2019 at Mercer County Park. We will not be having regular classes at the ashram on that day, but we will be taking attendance there, prior to the walkathon. Please go online, register and support this noble cause. See you all there.

<http://www.chinmayavrindavan.org/cord-walkathon>

Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 3

Hari Om Parents,

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakratunda mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Om Saraswati namastubhyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book) - **New**

Activities:

1. We played the Concentration Game right before we headed to the temple for the Saraswati pooja. After the chanting of 3 "Om"s kids keep their eyes closed. They listen quietly and counting in their mind, the number of stones being dropped into a metal box during this quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game helps with focus and improves concentration. A few more of them got it right this time! Most of them were close. They are all eager to get it right the next time!
2. We took some time to talk about the significance of Navratri.
3. The kids did a great job following along with the priest & performing Saraswati pooja today.
4. Comment of the Day: Right after our concentration game, we had a few minutes for questions and comments. One of our students made an awesome connection today by saying, if we count the stones out loud, it becomes like the actions of the demons Marica & Subbahu who were trying to disturb or disrupt the yagnya. Counting out loud, disturbs everyone's concentration during the game!!!

After a brief recap, we jumped into our journey through Bala Ramayana. As the brothers continued to ask "are we there yet", the trio finally arrived at the Siddhashrama. Visvamitra's ashram was located where Lord Narayana performed great tapas. That led to the story of Mahabali the grandson of Prahalada & why Vamana was born to Aditi & Kashyapa. We described how Mahabali never refused the request of anyone or anything & that Vamana came to humble Mahabali, requesting 3 paces of land, growing into Trivikrama, his first pace covered the earth, the second one the heavens and for the third, out of humility Mahabali offered his head, making him immortal.

The story continued on to the 6 day yagna, that the rishis along with Sage Visvamitra were set to perform. The brothers were told to keep a keen watch out for the demons. The first 5 days went on without a hitch. Then on day 6, Rama & Laksmana had to

deal with Marica & Subahu. There were signs of evil that began to swirl around the ashram. The flames in the firepit started to rise up as a warning sign. The sky started to darken and the demons were ready to fling unholy flesh & blood into the sacrificial fire. We explained that Rama tossed Marica into the sea, 100 yojanas, approximately 500 miles away (was not killed as he still had a role to play). Subahu & the others were killed by Rama's Agneyastra. The yagna went off without a hitch. The rishis were all very happy.

The brothers along with Visvamisra continued on towards Mithila, curious to see the wonderful bow that king Janaka had. On the outskirts of Mithila, they stopped at the deserted ashrama of Gautama rishi who fled to the Himalayas after cursing his wife Ahalya to contemplate her actions inside a rock. That curse was finally broken when Rama stepped on the stone, Ahalya who was in deep tapas emerged & received Lord Rama's blessings. She then welcomed them & offered her hospitality. Gautama rishi also returned.

Please have the kids bring their coloring book, my prayers book & hand book to class every week. We have crayons available in class to share, if the kids prefer to have some of their own, they are welcome to bring some.

We will continue our story during our next class. Please practice the prayers that we teach the kids in class, at home. Please ask the kids what they learnt in class.

Required books for Grade 1

5. My Prayers Book
6. Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

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We require at least 1 parent inside the ashram during the full duration of the class. You are free to choose an Adult Study Group or sign up to Volunteer or Meditate/Read in the Temple.

There will be **NO** class next week. We will meet at Mercer County Park, East Picnic area on October 13th for our next class.

Announcement: The annual CORD walkathon is on October 13, 2019 at Mercer County Park. We will not be having regular classes at the ashram on that day, but we will be taking attendance there, prior to the walkathon. Please go online, register and support this noble cause. See you all there.

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Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 4
Annual CORD walkathon, 2019

Week 5
Hari Om Parents,
Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Om Saraswati namastubhyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
4. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book) - **New**
5. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book) - **New**

Activities:

1. House Inaugural Assembly

After a brief recap of our story so far, we continued on with how King Janaka, the ruler of Mithila was ploughing the fields with his hands one day, prior to a yagna. He heard crying and to his surprise, found a beautiful baby girl in the fields. He accepted the baby as a gift from Bhooma Devi herself and he named her Sita. We introduced 2 new shlokas this week. We explained the meaning of both of the shlokas and how

“Samudra vasane devi...”, is an apt shloka to learn at this time during our story as we are discussing Mother Earth.

As a child, Sita loved to play with Rudhra’s bow, which had been a family heirloom for a very long time. Sita grew up into a beautiful young woman with all the qualities of a perfect woman. On seeing that, King Janaka was deeply concerned about how he would be able to find the perfect match for his daughter. He decided to use that very bow that Sita was so fond of to fetch himself the perfect son-in-law! Most of the kids knew the continuation of this part of the story!

The trio (Visvamithra, Rama & Lakshmana) continued into the city of Mithila that was decorated for all the festivities that were to follow once King Janaka found the apt suitor for his beloved daughter Sita. The huge hall was filled with people eager to make the beautiful Sita their bride. A chariot on which Rudhra’s bow was on required 500 men to pull to get the bow into the hall. After a multitude of suitors failed to complete the challenge of lifting, stringing and breaking Rudhra’s bow, Sage Visvamitra prompts Rama to take his turn. He very easily lifts, stings & successfully breaks the bow & his success is heard everywhere! Rama & Sita exchange garlands. After that, messengers were sent to inform & invite King Dasaratha, who was overjoyed to Mithila.

The wedding will have to wait till next week as we had a short class!

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week’s class

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Required books for Grade 1

1. My Prayers Book
2. Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 6

Hari Om Parents,
Happy Deepavali! Thank you to the 6 students that showed up for class this week.
Please take a moment to review with your child what we did during class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Om Saraswati namastubhyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
4. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
5. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
6. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book) - **New**
7. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book) - **New**

Activities:

1. We told the kids the significance of Deepavali, how different people may celebrate it in different ways & the reason why we celebrate the festival & narrated a few stories.
2. We introduced the first shloka of the Gurustotram and thought it was the perfect day to introduce Subham karoti kalyanam as well. We explained the meaning of the shlokas to the kids.
3. We introduced shlokas 1 & 2 of Chapter 1 in The Geeta. They are in our handbooks in both Sanskrit & English. Please help the kids practice the shlokas that were taught in class. The kids will be learning shlokas 1-16 & that will be their requirement for the Geeta Chanting Competition. Please refer to the following website gitachanting.net for the right pronunciation. Swamiji's Geeta Chanting link is also available for the kids to learn from.
4. We did a Diwali craft with Diyas (lamps) where the kids shared what they did and or plan to do for Diwali.
5. We did some yoga stretches.

We got back to our story after a brief recap of how Rama and Lakshmana along with Sage Vishwamitra, ended up in Mithila. We kept our story short this week as many were absent.

It was an emotional reunion between the 2 boys that had left Ayodhya on a mission and their father! They all got the blessings of the elders. The wedding of Rama & Sita took place after the arrival of Rama's family from Ayodhya. Mithila was decked up with all things bright and beautiful, rangolis, flowers, dias, etc. everywhere. The people were overjoyed. Not only did Sita & Rama get married, Urmila married Lakshmana, Mandavi married Bharata and Surtakirti married Shatrughna.

We then continued the story of how King Janaka felt that his daughters & nieces were leaving, his heart & kingdom empty & how King Dasharatha was overjoyed! But his happiness was short lived as they encountered Sage Parasurama (who had vowed to kill all ksatriyas as his father was killed by one) on their way back to Ayodhya. Rama takes care of it & relieves his father of his anxiety by completing the challenge of picking up & stringing the bow that Parashurama gives him. But Rama says he needs to fire the strung bow at something and that he cannot kill a brahmana, so he shoots away all of the "Tapas" that the sage had accumulated. After this encounter, Parashurama is humbled and he goes to the Himalayas. They newly weds arrived in Ayodhya and everyone were overjoyed! We stopped our story here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

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Required books for Grade 1

3. My Prayers Book
4. Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 7

Hari Om Parents,

Please take a moment to review with your child what we did during class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Om Saraswati namastubhyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
4. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
5. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
6. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book) - **New**
8. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We had our class pictures taken. Thank you for sending your kids in traditional Indian attire.
2. Please sign up for Annadhanam on Saturday November 16th. Please see the link below for the items that can be donated, etc. Scroll down the sign-up genius list, and sign up for the items you would like to contribute. Please drop off the items well within the mentioned time. Kindly check the time and place to drop in the sign up sheet. Parents and kids who are interested can go to the soup kitchen directly and serve as well, address is posted in the sign up sheet as well!
If you have any issues with the link please reach out to us. It is always appreciated and valued - upholding what our pledge says 'giving more than what we take...'. Thanks in advance for your generous donations.
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409044fa4a72aa1fa7-balavihar1>
3. We have started coloring in our Bala Ramayana coloring book. Some kids have missed a class or 2, & we have had a few abbreviated sessions due to other activities & were unable to fit the coloring activity. As we have a few extra school days off this week, can you have the kids color the pages in the middle that they haven't completed. **Please stop on Lesson 9.** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
4. We introduced the 3rd & 4th shloka of Chapter 1 in The Geeta. They are in our handbooks in both Sanskrit & English. Please help the kids practice the shlokas that were taught in class. The kids will be learning shlokas 1-16 & that will be their requirement for the Geeta Chanting Competition. Please refer to the

following website for the Gita. gitachanting.net for the right pronunciation. Please also refer to swamiji's video link for practice.

We recapped our Bala Ramayana story so far, for the benefit of those who missed a class or 2 in the past weeks and just to see how much the kids remembered. They all did really well! Please ask the kids what they learnt in class.

Our journey through Bala Ramayana continued with the newly weds and King Dasaratha's family returning to Ayodhya. Everyone was thrilled to have their princes back. Sita made an instant impression there and all the girls wanted to be just like her. Rama and his brothers assisted their father with matters of the State. King Dasaratha could not be happier! 12 years passed and King Dasaratha, after consulting with Guru Vasishta decided to coronate Rama as Yuvaraja the following day as it was the most auspicious day even though Bharata and Shatrughna were away in Kekeya. Rama takes the news of his coronation humbly. Kausalya and Sita are overjoyed. The news spreads like wildfire and the kingdom of Ayodhya is overjoyed! Immediate preparations begin.

Kaikeyi was minding her own business, while Manthara (her hunch backed maid) was instantly conjuring up a plan to poison Kaikeyi's mind. The once loving and sweet queen that was initially overjoyed by the news of Rama's coronation, turns evil and decided to cash in her 2 boons that she had received for saving King Dasaratha's life long ago. The enraged Kaikeyi demands Dasharatha to coronate Bharatha as king of Ayodhya and to send Rama to the Dhantaka forest for 14 years of exile. She goes on to threaten the king that she would take poison and would die if he refused her demand. Her death would then be the king's fault. The king is in an instant state of shock, he now had to choose between his love for his son Rama and Dharma! He was barely able to speak but faintly continues to say "Rama...Rama..."

Prince Rama is summoned and he arrives to see his father in this state of agony. Everything had changed in about 12 hours. Rama had gotten the news of his coronation the previous afternoon at 4P.M. and now he hears of totally different scenarios brewing! Rama wanted to do anything for his father to make him feel better. Kaikeyi takes the lead and asks Rama to promise that he would do as she says. She prompts him to fulfill his father's dharma. Without any hesitation, Rama agrees to both conditions and immediately prepares to depart for the Dandaka forest. We paused our story as the class was silent. We discussed how Rama stayed composed as he took both kinds of news in a calm and collected manner, he was not overjoyed upon hearing the news of

his coronation and he was not sad or angry on hearing that his brother Bharatha was to be crowned king and that he was being sent to the Dhantaka forest for 14 years.

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Required books for Grade 1

My Prayers Book

Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 8

Hari Om Parents,
The following is what we did during today's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Om Saraswati namastubhyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
4. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
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6. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
8. "Gururbhrama" (page 61 in My Prayers book) - **New**
9. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 “Om”s kids keep their eyes closed. They listen quietly and count the number of stones being dropped into a metal box, in their mind during this quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game helps with focus and improves concentration. A few of them got it right, most of them were close. They are all eager to get it right the next time!
2. We continued coloring in our Bala Ramayana coloring book. Some kids have missed a class or 2, & we have had a few abbreviated sessions due to other activities & were unable to fit the coloring activity. The kids can color the pages in the middle that they haven't completed them so far. **Please stop on Lesson 11 (page 14).** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
3. We introduced the 5th & 6th shloka of Chapter 1 in The Geeta. They are in our handbooks in both Sanskrit & English. Please help the kids practice the slokas that were taught in class. The kids will be learning slokas 1-16 & that will be their requirement for the Geeta Chanting Competition. Please refer to the following website for the Gita. gitachanting.net for the right pronunciation. Please also refer to swamiji's video link for practice.

We continued our journey through Balaramyana after a brief recap of what we heard during our previous class. This week's setting began in Ayodhya inside the palace where things took a drastic turn between 4 P.M. and 4 A.M. the following day.

Lakshmana was silently observing what was happening. As Rama headed out after taking the blessings of Kaikeyi and Dasaratha, Lakshmana was enraged and claims that the King has lost his mind! Rama announces his decision to the people of Ayodhya and continues to meet his mom. He gave up everything that said royalty and related the recent happenings. Immediately as a mother, she wanted to go with her child, but Rama tells her that her duty is to take care of King Dasaratha, and he would not do anything to oppose Dharma! Laksmana and Sita are able to convince Rama that they would accompany him. Kaikeyi had bark garments ready for the 3 of them. Sumantara wanted to accompany the trio to the forest with the army, but Kaikeyi was immediately opposed to that thought as she did not want her son Bharata to come home to an empty kingdom. Ram did not want anything except what a hermit in the forest would have. Sage Vasishta who was a very calm natured person, was enraged. Sumitra blessed Laksmana and told him to treat Rama as his father, Sita as his mother and the forest as Ayodhya!

Sumantara had the chariot ready to depart. The people of Ayodhya followed their beloved trio as the horses galloped away, King Dasaratha, watched from his balcony as the dust slowly faded. With a heavy heart, he continued to faintly chant his son Rama's name. The people followed the chariot to the banks of the river Tamasa, where they stopped for the night. Before dawn, Rama said, they should leave before everyone else woke up. They continued to the banks of river Ganga. Guha was the chief of a tribe in that area and loved Rama, embraced him, ordered a feast and asked him to spend the 14 years with his tribe. Rama denied his offerings, asked for a simple meal and early the next morning, they took leave from a tearful Sumantara, boarded a raft to sail across the Ganges to the Dandaka forest.

They reach the ashram of Sage Bharadwaj and stopped to rest for the night. Next morning Rama finds out from the Sage, some details about Chitrakuta. Rama decides that it would be an ideal place for them to spend their fourteen years. Following his directions they reached Chitrakuta and were happy to see the location, beautiful and serene with trees filled with flowers, chirping birds, and flowing rivers. Sita was pleased and Lakshmana immediately got busy building a kutiya for Rama and Sita. All three of them began to settle well in the forest.

The scene then switched to a sorrowful Ayodhya -- Sumantra returned to the kingdom with an empty chariot and makes his way to visit King Dasaratha and Kausalya and conveys the message that Rama, Sita and Lakshmana had reached the forest. Hearing this, their sorrow from separation of their beloved son Rama grew many folds. Mother Kausalya accuses King Dasaratha for being responsible for all that has happened. King Dasaratha then decided to weakly narrate an incident that had happened while he was a young prince and the consequence of which he is suffering from now, the separation of his dear son Rama. The story of Shravan whose parents were blind and he, who was shot mistakenly by Prince Dasaratha while he was hunting by sound, not by vision was narrated and the curse that befell on the King by the parents of the victim unfortunately came true! We stopped at this juncture. students were speechless after listening to this story.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLYbwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJoJDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPNTnZieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zeus7FhUTvnCfUB7BxhnTYFr4IHq5R7mMh5HVwL_8_Q/edit?usp=sharing

We require at least 1 parent inside the ashram during the full duration of the class. You are free to choose an Adult Study Group or sign up to Volunteer or Meditate/Read in the Temple.

Required books for Grade 1

My Prayers Book

Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,

Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 9

Hari Om Parents,

The following is what we did during Sunday's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
5. "Om Saraswati namastubhyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
6. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
8. "Gururbhrama" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
9. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om"s kids keep their eyes closed. They listen quietly and count the number of stones being dropped into a metal box, in their mind during this quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game helps with focus and improves concentration. Many of them got it right this time, most of them were close. They are all eager to get it right the next time!

2. We continued coloring in our Bala Ramayana coloring book. Some kids have missed a class or 2, & we have had a few abbreviated sessions due to other activities & were unable to fit the coloring activity. The kids can color the pages in the middle that they haven't completed them so far. **Please stop on Lesson 13 (page 16).** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring. We do not have class next Sunday due to the Thanksgiving long weekend. If your child is behind on coloring, please have them catch up if time permits. Thank you.
3. We introduced the 5th & 6th shloka of Chapter 1 in The Geeta. They are in our handbooks in both Sanskrit & English. Please help the kids practice the slokas that were taught in class. The kids will be learning slokas 1-16 & that will be their requirement for the Geeta Chanting Competition. Please refer to the following website for the Gita. gitachanting.net for the right pronunciation. Please also refer to Swamiji's video link for practice.

We continued our journey through Bala Ramayana with a quick recap of where we ended during our previous class. This week, we got back to Grief- stricken Ayodhya. We were in King Dasaratha's room, he was lying on his bed and was slowly narrating to his beloved queens, the curse of Sravana's parents and how it was coming true! He begged Kausalya and Sumitra for their forgiveness. His eyes were getting heavy, his hearing slowly declining, he was struggling to breath as he was crying out "Ha Rama! Ha Lakshmana! Ha Sita! Rama! Rama! His head drooped and oil in his room lamp ran out as he took his final breath.

Ayodhya at that point had just been hit with a double whammy of Rama's banishment and their king's passing. Sage Vasishta was the only voice of reason at that point. He tells the messengers to go Kaikeya to bring back Bharata and Shatrughna, bearing gifts and without telling them about Ayodhya's condition. Bharata had been feeling bad omens and was not sure what to expect. As the brothers passed through Ayodhya, they were not greeted by anyone, everyone was sad and sort of angry too. The confused brothers arrive at the palace and Kaikeyi is the only one there to greet him. He immediately asks why his father is not there...as he always welcomes them back with a warm and loving embrace. He then becomes aware of the plot that Mantara had cooked up and how his mother became poisoned.

Bharata is **ENRAGED!** He does not believe his ears. A "HULK" like personality began to brew inside of him. Bharatha began to blame himself for all the disastrous outcomes that were created by his mother, on his behalf! Shatrughna, who was by nature a very calm and collected prince, lost all sense of control on seeing Manthara! He even

became terribly violent towards her. He eventually calmed down. Bharatha does not want the throne, he immediately went to beg for forgiveness from Kausalya and Sumithra. The funeral takes place with sage Vasishta's guidance. Everyone's initial reaction on seeing Bharata is **rage!** But then they eventually find out that he had nothing to do with his mother's evil acts. Bharata refuses to take the throne and insists on seeing Rama. Everyone wanted to do the same. So the whole of Ayodhya headed towards Chitrakuta like a large army. Bharata went in bark garments and denied any special treatment or food. Their journey continued for 2 days and they were nearing the banks of river Ganga. Guha could see an army from a distance and he immediately sets his tribe up for battle, but some of the elders advise him otherwise. Then on closer analysis, they realise that Bharata was not coming with any evil intention. Bharata was in an eager haste to see Rama so they departed early the next morning. As they neared Chitrakuta, Rishi Bharadvaja was observing the army approaching and had a similar initial reaction as the others. But soon he too realized that Bharata had nothing to do with his mother's plan and guided him to proceed in the direction of Chitrakuta. We paused our story here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Required books for Grade 1

My Prayers Book

Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,

Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 10

The following is what we did during Sunday's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
5. "Om Saraswati namastubhyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
6. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
8. "Gururbhrama" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
9. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om"s kids keep their eyes closed. They listen quietly and count the number of stones being dropped into a metal box, in their mind during this quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game helps with focus and improves concentration. Many of them got it right this time, most of them were close. They are all eager to get it right the next time!
2. We continued coloring in our Bala Ramayana coloring book. Some kids have missed a class or 2, & we have had a few abbreviated sessions due to other activities & were unable to fit the coloring activity. The kids can color the pages in the middle that they haven't completed them so far. **Please stop on Lesson 15 (page 18).** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring. We do not have class next Sunday due to the Thanksgiving long weekend. If your child is behind on coloring, please have them catch up if time permits. Thank you.
3. We introduced the 7th & 8th shloka of Chapter 1 in The Geeta. They are in our handbooks in both Sanskrit & English. Please help the kids practice the shlokas that were taught in class. The kids will be learning shlokas 1-16 & that will be their requirement for the Geeta Chanting Competition. Please refer to the following website for the Gita. gitachanting.net for the right pronunciation. Please also refer to Swamiji's video link for practice.

Our adventures through Bala Ramayana continued.

The trio continue on with their life in Chitrakuta, becoming more comfortable with their surroundings and accepting that this would be their way of life for 14 years. Sita is

pleased to be close to nature and enjoys the natural beauty of what Chitakuta has to offer. Sita accompanies her husband and Lakshmana many times to collect fruit, flowers, nuts and berries.

One day, Rama becomes alert to the sound of an oncoming army and requests his brother to climb a tree to see what is approaching. Lakshmana like all those prior to him, assumes that Bharata is coming with evil intentions of harming Rama. But he was immediately calmed down by Rama, as he teased him by saying that he would ask Bharata to give Lakshmana the throne, as he was sure that Bharata would listen to Rama! As the army moved into closer proximity, they see Bharata and Shatrughan in bark garments. Bharata immediately falls at Rama's feet begging for forgiveness. Rama was very nonchalant, enquiring about the kingdom, the people and his father. Bharata responded by saying he did not accept to be king as only the first born was to take that role and as for their father, he conveyed the horrifying news of his demise! Rama is drowned by sorrow, swoons and faints. Sita and the brothers revive him and they perform the final rites and rituals.

Rama then explained to Bharata that everything - sadness, happiness - is the play of fate. Having taken human birth, we must bow our heads before the destiny marked for us and accept them as they are. Kingdom, wealth, name, fame - all these mean nothing. All these things shall pass. Why weep for them? He tells his beloved brother not to grieve. He then asks him if there is anyone on earth to whom sorrow, disease, and death have not visited?

Rama makes his point by saying that he needs to uphold "Dharma", and must keep his promise to his father, so will not be able to return to Ayodhya at that point. Bharata then agrees to a compromise, asks for Rama's sandals, takes them and places them on his head. He agrees to run the kingdom for 14 years till Rama returns to Ayodhya. He would live a simple life like the rest of the people and have Rama's sandals take the throne.

Rama realizes that even though Chitrakuta was a perfect location for their stay and Sita was very comfortable there, he decided to move further into the depths of the Dandaka forest to prevent the people from temptation of coming to meet the trio. As they continue their journey, they encounter several Rishis, get their blessings and are presented with powerful Astharas. On their way, they encounter various demons as well. A notable one was the huge rakshasa Viradha. He had the boon of no death. He scares Sita and puts her on his shoulder. Rama and Lakshmana are furious, then both of them take Sita's spot. The brothers chop off Viradha's arms and all other body parts till he thumps onto

the ground and his neck find Rama's feet and he is finally liberated. The trio arrive at Sutikshana's ashram. They accept to make that their home and to protect the Rishis from demons.

10 years went by...the trio went from one ashram to another, slaying demons and collecting astharas. Sita didn't understand why Rama was doing this and involving himself in violence. Rama explained that it was Kshatriya Dharma to protect the Rishis. Rama had a great desire to see Sage Agastya. We then told the kids why Agastya was so powerful and the story about the Vindhya mountain range. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana continue their journey further south. Then we told them the story about the clever demon brothers Vatapi and Ilvala & about their cunning plan they used to kill multiple rishis. Agastha used his own clever plan to consume and digest Vatapi and used his own terrifying vision to burn Ilvala to ashes. The kids enjoyed that part very much. The trio arrive at Agastya's ashram, he was overjoyed to see them. They took the sage's blessings. Rama was then gifted a bow that Vishvakarma had made for Vishnu and then made their way towards Panchvati. We paused here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEU0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Required books for Grade 1

My Prayers Book

Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,

Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 11

The following is what we did during Sunday's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
5. "Om Saraswati namastubhyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
6. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
8. "Gururbhrama" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
9. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book) - **New**
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Bhramarpanam" (page 13 in My Prayers book) - **New**

Activities:

1. We continued coloring in our Bala Ramayana coloring book. Some kids have missed a class or 2, & we have had a few abbreviated sessions due to other activities & were unable to fit the coloring activity. The kids can color the pages in the middle that they haven't completed so far. **Please stop on Lesson 17 (page 20).** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring. We do not have class next Sunday due to the Thanksgiving long weekend. If your child is behind on coloring, please have them catch up if time permits. Thank you.
2. We introduced the 9th, 10th & 11th shlokas of Chapter 1 in The Geeta. They are in our handbooks in both Sanskrit & English. Please help the kids practice the shlokas that were taught in class. The kids will be learning shlokas 1-16 & that will be their requirement for the Geeta Chanting Competition. Please refer to the following website for the Gita. gitachanting.net for the right pronunciation. Please also refer to Swamiji's video link for practice.
3. We had to end class a bit early as we had the privilege of listening to the Swaranjali stage performance.

We did a quick quiz like recap to get back onto our journey through Bala Ramayana. With Sage Agastya's location recommendation in mind, the trio arrive at Panchavati. Upon arrival, they encounter Jatayu. He introduces himself as King Dasaratha's friend, relative of Garuda and his presence was to keep a watch out for Sita. They found a nice location near the Godavari river, for their home for the rest of their exile. Laksmana was excellent with his building skills that he had learnt from Sage Vasishta. In no time, he

had a cute little hut built and the trio were discussing how Bharata and Shatrughan were living simple lives and all 4 brothers were eagerly awaiting their reunion.

As the season slowly changed to winter, a lady demon Surpanakha was a shapeshifter, (daughter of Vaisrava muni) was cursed to live this life of an ugly roaming demon due to her past bad deeds, showed up asking questions what the trio was doing in her neck of the woods! She instantly fell in love with Rama and asked him to marry her. Rama mockingly says he's married to Sita and that would not be possible and leads her to believe that Lakshmana is equally good looking and is not there with a wife. So settles and then asks Lakshmana to marry her. He then goes on to say that he's Rama's slave and it wouldn't be appealing to her to be a slave of a slave and convinces her to ask Rama to leave Sita for her. On hearing that she is really tempted and tells Rama the same and says she would eat Sita up! On hearing that, Rama dives to protect his wife and orders Lakshmana to control the situation. Lakshman immediately chops off Surpanakha's ears and nose! An earth shattering scream erupted from her mouth, she ran away and disappeared into the Dandaka forest.

Surpanakha with blood gushing from her ears and nose areas, approaches her rakshasa brothers Khara and Dusana, who were surrounded by a court full of demons. She makes a complaint against Rama and Lakshmana conveniently leaving out her fault in the incident! Khara immediately sent 14 of his most powerful demons to go slay Rama and Lakshmana. Surpanakha went along to witness the incident. On seeing them coming, Rama tells his brother to take Sita to the cave and keep guard. Rama took the 14 of them out in an instant. Surpanakha immediately reported the outcome. An army of 14,000 was then assembled and led by Khara, Dusana and Trisha. Similarly, Rama was able to wipe out that Rakshasa army, except for Akampana who was the sole survivor. The Devas showers flowers from heaven on seeing Rama's grand success!

Akampana who was visibly trembling, rushes to Lanka to convey this devastating news to their leader Ravana! Akampana also states that he should do some smart planning by kidnapping the beautiful Sita, causing anxiety for Rama would be the only way to defeat Rama as he was way too powerful! The enraged Ravana approaches Marica for council on how to avenge his sister's humiliation. Marica who was performing penance at an ashram, advises that Rama will put an end to the Rakshasa race, so told Ravana to leave it alone! He agrees and forgets about Sita.

Surpanakha arrives the next day and is shocked and enraged that her brother has not done anything! She too triggers the thought of the beautiful Sita as being a perfect matrimonial match for her beloved brother Ravana. He then promises his sister that he

will take revenge. Ravana then demands Marica to change his form into a Golden Deer to attract Sita's attention. Then to distract Rama and Lakshmana so that he could kidnap Sita. Marica reluctantly accepts his king's order, knowing well that this was the beginning of the end of the rakshasa race. We paused here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSWh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJoiDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Required books for Grade 1

My Prayers Book

Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 12

We had a week of reviewing & catching up!

Week 14

Hari Om Parents,
Happy 2020!

The following is what we did during this week's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)

5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book)
8. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. Please continue to practice the Geeta Chanting slokas with your kids. They have been introduced to slokas 1-16 in Chapter 1 & that will be their requirement for the Geeta Chanting Competition. Please refer to the following website gitachanting.net for the right pronunciation. Most kids have familiarized themselves with the first 3 slokas! Please record videos & send your individual child chanting the shlokas to the Geeta Chanting Team cnjbalaviharhouses@gmail.com to earn house points.
2. We have introduced most of the Dainikaparthana (means Daily Prayers) & 4 slokas from the Gurustoram. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer & daily prayer.
3. If you have some extra time at home, please have the kids complete their coloring pages in their Bala Ramayana coloring books. Some kids have missed a class or 2, & we have had a few abbreviated sessions due to other activities & were unable to fit the coloring activity in. **Please stop on Lesson 23.** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
4. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om's kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets the mind and improves concentration. A few got the count correct & most were really close.
5. We had to cut the class short as there was a stage performance quiz show by the 7th grade team on Ramayana, that we all enjoyed.

After an extended recap of our story so far, we continued on to reiterate some key points. We told the class that Ravana did not listen to Marica's stern advice against trying to offend Rama, due to his blind desire to capture Sita. We also talked about how Rama thought, if the "Golden Deer" was actually real, then he would capture it for Sita

so that she can have it as a pet. If it ended up being a raksasa, then he would kill it, no harm - no foul! Either way, he thought that he had nothing to lose, even though Lakshmana did not approve of his plan. After Marica was shot by Rama's arrow, he called out for help in Rama's voice! Lakshmana thought it was another trick and was still very hesitant to leave Sita alone as he did not want to disobey his brother. Unfortunately, he ended up having to leave Sita in their ashram alone as she threatened him severely! He drew a line around the hut and gave her stern instructions as to "NEVER" cross the line under any circumstance as that was her "force field". She agreed to Lakshmana's conditions and forced him to depart to help his brother. Unfortunately Ravana in the disguise of a Rishi, tricks Sita into crossing over the force field to give him biksha! Thus Sita gets captured by Ravana!

Our story setting this week began in the Dandaka Forest, where Ravana has kidnapped Sita and they are flying high through the angered sky. Ravana had a strong grip on Sita's hand, Sita was struggling to free herself with all her might and she was screaming at the top of her lungs as Ravana's chariot was racing through the forest.

At that point, Jatayu was sleeping atop a tree and instantly awoke recognising that familiar voice of princess Sita! He immediately flew up in the air, introduced himself as the king of eagles & tried to reason with Ravana...King to King to prevent this adharma. When there was no way to sway Ravana's evil intentions, Jatayu began to fight with all his might. He killed the chariot's demon faced mules and Ravana's chariot smashed to the ground. He then attacked and injured Ravana. Sita was very fearful of Jatayu's well being, as she could see him getting weaker...she tells him to fly away and inform Rama and Lakshmana of what is happening.

Jatayu wanted to protect the princess and continued to fight as Ravana pulled out his sword & chopped off his wings! Sita immediately found the strength to yank herself loose and went to Jatayu's side. At this point, Ravana went and caught Sita by her hair and dragged her along with him, bringing infinite shame and disgrace to his royal family and all rakshasas. The duo continued to fly southward. As they did so, Sita decided to drop her jewels whenever she saw people from the sky, hoping that they will be clue for Rama, showing what direction she was being taken in.

Ravana and Sita finally reached Lanka and there he put evil Rakshasis in charge of Sita. They were told to make her forget Rama. But Sita refused to do so and was constantly meditating on her husband's name. The enraged Ravana told her that she will get 1 year to change her mind. If she did not, at that point he would instruct his rakshasis to cut her up, cook her and serve her as Ravana's breakfast! Ravana wanted to make sure

that he and his kingdom were on high alert. He increased his army presence all around his island border. He also sent some of his raksashas back to the Dandaka forest to keep an eye on Rama and Lakshmana, and find out what their plans are. We stopped our story here.

Our journey continued. The brothers meet. Rama is extremely disappointed with Lakshmana for disobeying his stern instructions to take care of Sita and not to leave her side. Lakshmana had to defend his actions, as Sita was tricked by the demon's fake voice, even though Lakshmana was very sure that it was a rakshasa's trickery. Rama feared the worst possible scenario that his beloved Sita might've been eaten up by a demon. On reaching their ashrama, they did not see her. Grief stricken Rama, continued to accuse his brother of abandoning Sita! The surroundings were also gloomy, the birds were silent, the flowers were droopy and the animals had tears in their eyes. Rama went on to search under rocks, behind bushes and even asked the trees if they had seen his beloved Sita. Lakshmana tried his best to console his brother by reminding how he has overcome so much heartbreak so far and that they will definitely find Sita. After gaining his composure, the duo set out southwards.

As they continued on, they suddenly came across some flowers scattered on the ground. Rama immediately identified them as the ones he had picked for Sita that morning! They then saw small footprints and very large ones too. They also saw a jewel studded bow, a broken chariot, a crown and awful faced mules! They could visualize a struggle. As Rama turned around looking for more clues, he found some beads from Sita's necklace...his sorrow turned into blazing anger! He picked up his astaras and vowed world destruction! Lakshmana eventually calmed him down by saying that the ones responsible should pay for their actions, but the innocent shouldn't have to. On hearing those words of wisdom, the brothers saw a huge form close by. They saw Jatayu, with his wings and legs cut off from the battle. He kept himself alive to narrate the happenings to Rama. After doing so, he receives Rama's blessings and passes away. The brothers perform the final rites for the faithful king.

The brothers travel southward. They are suddenly captured by a monster Kabandha. It had one eye and a mouth with sharp teeth in the middle of its stomach, it had no head or legs. Rama & Lakshmana immediately took their swords out & chopped off the monster's arms. The huge form landed with a thump. The monster then told them that he was a heavenly being, but was cursed by a rishi for scaring him and would be freed only by Rama. Having chopped off his arms and grabbing hands, his desires were removed liberating him. The brothers burned the body and from the flames came a heavenly body that told them to go to the banks of the river Pampa, find the vanara king

Sugriva on Rsyamuka hill and he will help you find Sita. Please ask the kids who Kabandha, what it means to be a Kabandha & if it is right to be like Kabandha.

The brothers continue on towards River Pampa. They arrive at Sage Matanga's ashrama. There they meet an old tapasvini named Sabari. When it was time for her guru to depart for this world, she too wanted to die! But Sage Matanga had told her that her duties on earth were not complete & that she had to encounter Sri Rama prior to her departure. So she had been very patiently awaiting His arrival. On seeing the brothers, she shed tears of joy that literally washed Rama's feet! She had gathered some forest berries for them but wanted to make sure that they were sweet & not sour, so tasted each berry & sorted only the sweet ones on a plate & offered them to Rama. Lakshmana was not happy about this & was about to prevent her from serving them, when Rama said he would love to have them & accepted her plate that was an offering of supreme devotion! Sabari's time had come to an end. With Rama's permission, she lit a fire & stepped into it & ascended to heaven. We paused here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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We require at least 1 parent inside the ashram during the full duration of the class. You are free to choose an Adult Study Group or sign up to Volunteer or Meditate/Read in the Temple.

Required books for Grade 1

My Prayers Book

Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,

Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 15

Hari Om Parents,

The following is what we did during today's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
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8. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. Please continue to practice the Geeta Chanting shlokas with your kids. They have been introduced to shlokas 1-16 in Chapter 1 & that will be their requirement for the Geeta Chanting Competition. Please refer to the following website gitachanting.net for the right pronunciation. Most kids have familiarized themselves with the first 3 shlokas! Please record videos & send your individual child chanting the shlokas to the Geeta Chanting Team cnjbalaviharhouses@gmail.com to earn house points.
2. We have introduced most of the Dainikaparthana (means Daily Prayers) & 4 shlokas from the Gurustoram. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer & daily prayer.
3. We did some coloring towards the end of class. If you have some extra time at home, please have the kids complete their coloring pages in their Bala Ramayana coloring books. Some kids have missed a class or 2, & we have had a few abbreviated sessions due to other activities & were unable to fit the coloring activity in. **Please stop on Lesson 25.** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
4. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om's kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets

the mind and improves concentration. Today several students got the count correct and most of them were really close.

Our story began today as the duo walked on in search of Sugriva. As they were wandering through the beautiful forest, they couldn't help but think of how Sita would've absolutely adored the surroundings. From the top of the Rishyamukha mountain, the fugitive vanara king Sugriva and few of his faithful followers saw the brothers approaching. They immediately thought it was Bali sending someone to harm them. Minister Hanuman decided to disguise himself as a brahmin and went on to intercept the duo. He introduced himself and the trio felt an instant bond! Hanuman and Lakshmana exchanged both of their uncomfortable circumstances to each other and at that point, Hanuman changed into his original form, he then lifted the brothers onto his shoulders and carried them towards Sugriva.

When they finally met Sugriva, he related his own unfortunate situation that he was in because of his brother Bali. Bali was a strong, brave and powerful warrior. Everyone feared him. An awful rakshasa named Dundubhi wanted to duel someone so he challenged the sea-god, he denied the challenge and referred him to the Himalayas. The Himalayas didn't want to duel either and suggested that Bali would be a good competitor. So he went to Kishkindha to challenge Bali. Bali was ready for a duel, he fought, he won and during his victory lap, he tossed the rakshasa miles away and when doing so, drops of blood fell on Sage Mathanga's ashrama. The angered sage cursed Bali that he would meet his death if he ever set foot on that mountain again.

After a while another demon, Mayavi - Dundubhi's younger brother came along to try to avenge his brother's death. In the middle of the night, he came to Kishkindha and started to create havoc. Both Bali and Sugriva were ready for battle...but Bali told his brother to stay back and protect his kingdom. But Sugriva followed his brother to witness the duel. Mayavi headed towards a cave and Bali followed him in a heated pursuit. After a while he heard a loud cry and then saw blood flowing out of the cave. He called out for his brother Bali...when he heard no response from him, he assumed the worst! Sugriva decided to take a huge boulder and block the cave's entrance in case Mayavi decided to come out and harm the rest of the vanaras. Sugriva had to go back to Kishkindha and tell his people the sad news. The people demanded Sugriva to become the new king and he hesitantly accepted. Several days passed and suddenly, Bali came back to his kingdom. He was enraged at what his brother had done! He banished him along with a few of his faithful followers, Bali took back his throne and he took Sugriva's wife too! As Rishyamukha mountain was the only place his brother feared, then Sugriva and his faithful decided to take asylum there.

We then discussed how 2 sets of brothers Rama & Bharatha, and Sugriva & Bali were in similar situations, but they both behaved very differently. The kids were able to draw the similarities and differences between them. Please do take some time and ask them what they thought.

We returned back to the Rishyamuka mountain. There Sugriva was telling Rama that the vanaras had seen a rakshasa speeding across the sky like a dark cloud grasping on to a crying lady. That lady had tied up some of her jewels in a cloth and tossed them down to the vanaras who were picking berries. One glance at them and Rama instantly knew they were Sita's. Sugriva asked for Rama's help to fix his situation and promised Rama that he would help him find Sita right after.

Sugriva was concerned that Rama would not be able to defend himself against Bali and actually doubted his strength. Lakshmana was enraged by Sugriva's doubt, but Rama flicked his toe and tossed Dundubhi's skeleton far away. Sugriva still was not impressed. Then Rama aimed his arrow at a tree...he let go and that arrow pierced through 6 trees and returned back to Rama! Seeing that, Sugriva was convinced that Rama was a formidable match for his brother and prostrated before Him.

The banished crew along with Rama and Lakshmana head to Kishkindha and Sugriva shouts out for Bali and challenges him to a duel. Bali instantly accepts and comes out with immense determination. Rama and Lakshmana watch from a distance and can see Sugriva getting very tired and weak. Unfortunately, Rama was hesitant to take a shot with his bow and arrow as the vanara brothers looked very much alike. Sugriva had to retreat as he was unable to carry on any longer. Extremely disappointed with Rama, Sugriva demands why Rama did not do anything. Rama had to explain his dilemma and told Sugriva to wear a flower garland and to go back and challenge Bali again. Sugriva agrees and does so.

This time, before Bali headed out, his wife Tara was very concerned. She told Bali that Rama and Lakshmana were on Sugriva's side, and she said that she had heard that they were very powerful. Bali responded by saying that, he too had heard about them, but he also heard that they were very righteous men and were on the side of dharma. Then Tara offered prayers for her husband's safety. The brothers restarted their duel. Sugriva was getting weak and from behind a tree, Rama found the right instance and had a perfect shot, he aimed his arrow and pierced Bali in his chest. Bali immediately fell to the ground. The vanaras along with Rama and Lakshmana rushed to his side. Bali looked at Rama with sad and accusing eyes and demanded an

explanation! Rama then lovingly explains to Bali that he had made a promise to Sugriva to set right the injustice towards him. Also he says that while hunting, one hides and shoots, that's not considered a crime. Complete understanding swept across Bali's face as he departed to the warrior's heaven.

All is right in Kishkindha...Sugriva is crowned king, Angada (Bali's son) is made Prince, normal life continues. The monsoon season brings heavy rains and flooding. Rama and Lakshmana spend their time inside a cave on the Rishayamuka mountain, worrying about how time is running out and that Sugriva has not kept up his end of the deal! Sugriva continued to party on. As the season changed and the rains stopped, Rama was still waiting to hear from his friend, the newly crowned king. Lakshmana was enraged and wanted to go and find out what the delay was. Rama calmed his brother down and sent him to go find out what the delay was. In the meantime, Hanuman was also thinking the same! Though Sugriva was still partying, Hanuman being the voice of reason, comes out as the whole kingdom heard the twang of Lakshmana's bow. Sugriva snaps out of his party state of mind and humbly receives Lakshmana and announces that he commands all of the vanara forces around the world to assemble within a day at Kishkindha. Sugriva accompanies Lakshmana to Rishyamuka to beg for Rama's pardon and he does so. We paused our story here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Required books for Grade 1

My Prayers Book

Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,

Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 16

Hari Om Parents,

The following is what we did during today's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
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12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book) - **New**

Activities:

1. Please continue to practice Geeta Chanting shlokas with your kids. They have been introduced to shlokas 1-16 in Chapter 1 & that will be their requirement for the Geeta Chanting Competition. Please refer to the following website gitachanting.net for the right pronunciation. Most kids have familiarized themselves with the first 3 shlokas! Please record videos & send your individual child chanting the shlokas to the Geeta Chanting Team cnjbalaviharhouses@gmail.com to earn house points.
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3. We did some coloring towards the end of class. If you have some extra time at home, please have the kids complete their coloring pages in their Bala Ramayana coloring books. Some kids have missed a class or 2, we have had a few abbreviated sessions due to other activities and were unable to fit the coloring activity in. **Please stop on Lesson 27.** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
4. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om's kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during

the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets the mind and improves concentration. Today most of the students got the count correct! I had told them prior to beginning that I might take a longer time in between stones to try to trick them, they did a great job concentrating!

After a brief quiz like re-cap of our story so far, we returned to Kishkindha. The search begins! The vanaras from all directions assembled & search parties were given a month's time to bring back information. Sugriva sent armies headed North, East and West. The team heading South consisted of Hanuman, Angadha, Jambavan and Nila. As everyone already had clues pointing South, Rama wanted Hanuman to be his personal messenger. He called him aside and took off his ring and gave it to Hanuman. He said that Sita would instantly recognise it and will know exactly who you are and who sent you. Hanuman bowed down to Rama and accepted the immense task. The teams from the other directions already were back reporting failure. The team heading South came across a cave and entered it. It was enchanted and was like a never ending maze of beautiful gold trees with rubies, diamonds and emeralds hanging from them, lovely waterfalls, lily ponds and plenty of food everywhere. It was paradise and a tapasvini called Svayamprabha lived there. Hanuman related the happenings leading them to their search. She told the vanaras to close their eyes and she would transport them out of the never ending maze.

When the vanaras opened their eyes, they were on the sea shore. They were all confused. Most of them wanted to just go back and enjoy the rest of their lives in the enchanted cave. Hanuman had to remind them about their mission. An old, handicapped and starving vulture named Sampati was eagerly watching the vanaras from a close by hill, planning how to score his next meal. When suddenly he heard the name Jatayu come up in conversation. His eyes lit up, but immediately saddened on hearing that he was killed by a rakshasa. Sampati called out to the vanaras asking what happened and they narrated the situation. Sampati told them how he was protecting his brother Jatayu from the sun when his wings got burnt off and he had landed here. He told them that he recently saw a demon fly across the ocean grasping on to a crying lady! The vanaras brought Sampati down from the hill, fed him and asked for more details. Then with his keen sight, he was able to see Lanka across the ocean, the rich royal kingdom, its beautiful gardens and under a tree surrounded by rakshasis, a lady was sadly sitting! As soon as Sampati related this to the vanaras, he could feel blood in his veins moving towards his wing area and small wings started sprouting! He had received a boon that his wings would grow back when he helped Rama!

Sita was finally located, now the task was how they were going to get to her. The vanaras started estimating how far they could jump. No one was able to say that they could jump across the ocean. Then Jambavan looked at Hanuman and started praising the multitude of abilities that the son of Vayu had and made him realize that his very birth is for serving Ramchandrajai and that Hanuman was their only hope to fulfill this mission. The hidden strength started to swell up inside of Hanuman and he started to glow and grow!!! He was ready to depart.

We were on the shore and nothing but the ocean was in front of the vanaras. Hanuman had just heard Jambavan tell him that his mere existence was to serve Ramchandrajai! He is totally inspired and thinks that he would have to climb high enough and be able to put immense pressure down on the earth to give him enough force to take the leap. He picks the Mahendra hill. He pictures Lord Rama and feels him in his heart, his yoga centered mind is concentrating only on the task at hand and he finally offers prayers to Surya, Indra, Brahma and to his dad Vayu.

Hanuman turns and faces southward. He musters up even more strength and now even his surroundings can feel it too! The rocks, streams, trees, flowers and animals can all feel his strength as more blood rushed through Hanuman's veins. He was ready and his shadow looked like a humongous dark cloud over the ocean. As his flight began and continued, he met with a multitude of obstacles.

When he came across Mainaka the mountain, he gracefully declined the offer to take rest on the mountain and promised to visit another time as his task at hand was highly time sensitive! Mainaka agreed and he was allowed to pass. After a while, the hungry monster Surasa wanted Hanuman to enter her mouth. Hanuman was very intelligent and decided to grow and increase his size. As he did so, Surasa too opened her mouth wider, when it was 50 yojanas wide, Hanuman shrunk to a speck, went in and out of her mouth to fulfill her desire. She was actually the Naga maiden, she was only testing him. She gave him her blessings and on Hanuman flew. With great speed, Maruthi sped on, he encountered a hungry rakshasi and decided to speed through her mouth and made a hole through and out of her body, killing her without wasting time. He finally reached the shores of beautiful Lanka. He shrinks himself down to the size of a little monkey then moves to the top of a hill and surveys his surroundings.

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Regards,

Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

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Hari Om Parents,

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11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)
14. "Manojavam Maaruta" (page 152 in My Prayers book) - **New**

Activities:

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3. We did some coloring towards the end of class. If you have some extra time at home, please have the kids complete their coloring pages in their Bala Ramayana coloring books. Some kids have missed a class or 2, we have had a few abbreviated sessions due to other activities and were unable to fit the coloring activity in. **Please stop on Lesson 28.** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
4. We wrapped up our class early and headed to the temple to watch the 5th graders perform the wax palace part from the Mahabharata.

We began with a short quiz-like recap of our story so far. It was nice to see that even a few kids who were absent for previous classes were able to answer the questions! Our setting this week was in Lanka. Hanuman was absolutely mesmerized by the beauty, richness, massive architectural marvels, it's moats and novel methods of protection forming a very well laid out city. He snapped out of his trance and immediately got back to the task at hand. It probably felt like getting to Lanka was the easy part...now his real search begins. He had no clue if or not Sita was alive and if she was, where she would be. Hanuman is known as "Buddhimatam Varishtham" - wise amongst the wisest (Introduced the shloka and discussed the meaning). He instantly plans to enter the city after dark to be able to slip past guards. The soft moon light helped guide him. He encountered a fierce rakshasi. She immediately wanted to find out why a little monkey was snooping around. She shoved him away and Hanuman immediately gave her a sucker-punch and she plopped to the ground, stunned by the unexpected power, she remembered the prophecy! She was the Goddess Guardian of the city and immediately felt that the rakshasa race was coming to an end! She bowed to the little monkey and gave him entrance!

The little monkey continued his expedition prancing from place to place, palace to palace, courtyard to courtyard admiring the riches and splendor of Lanka, still unable to locate Sita. He finally entered Ravana's palace, he saw numerous queens, enjoying the luxury and their surroundings. Then he slowly peered through his bedroom. There stretched out in regal splendor on a solid gold bed, studded with gemstones was Ravana. He was surrounded by several wives, for a second Hanuman was actually looking for Sita and then instantly thought otherwise! She would never be there! He left the palace and feeling highly unsuccessful and dejected went out into the courtyard and sat there on the compound wall. A multitude of negative thoughts were running through his mind.

As Hanuman sat on the wall, he saw an Ashoka Vana in the courtyard. There were beautiful flowers and sweet fragrances from them filling the air. He thought to himself, this is the only place he hadn't searched and it seems to be more like an area that Sita could be. It was heavily guarded by rakshasis that were gruesome in all ways possible! He continued to glance around, the moon slowly crept out from behind the clouds and under an ashoka tree was an elegant lady, simply dressed, pale, eyes red and swollen from constant weeping, lips trembling and constantly chanting "Rama"! Eureka!!! The consort of Ramchandraji has been located! Hanuman's heart skipped a beat and was mesmerized and overjoyed that he has good news for his Rama.

Hanuman was startled by the sudden sound of anklets, women laughing and those voices were subdued but they were getting closer. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Ravana approaching. He immediately moved to a spot in the tree that had a lot of thick leaves. The majestic king was stunning from head to toe. He could see Sita growing paler, shivering and watched her turn her head away, as the procession of queens, women and Ravana got closer. He kindly tried to convince Sita to marry him by showing off and talking about all the riches that could be hers. He tried his best to talk down what Rama has, what he was putting her through, who he was at the moment and how he could not provide for her. Ravana had never begged anyone this way before.

Sita plucked a blade of grass and placed it between her and Ravana. She tried to reason with him by saying that it was adharma to have desire for another man's wife. She said she belongs to Rama and will never think of anyone else. If he continued on this disgraceful path, he would not be spared by the wrath of Rama. He may forgive you if you let her go now and forget this ridiculous desire of his. Ravana was furious and gave her 2 more months to change her mind, or be cut up and served as his breakfast!

After Ravana left, the rakshasis in the garden started worrying Sita for rejecting Ravana. Some of them were even eager to eat her up. She was frightened and began to weep, even then, she was constantly chanting Rama's name. Trijata was one of the women there, she was wise and demanded the rest of the rakshasis to leave Sita alone and beg for mercy and forgiveness as she has had dreams of Ravana's 10 heads rolling on the ground and Lanka destroyed by Rama who is an avatara of Lord Vishnu. Saying thus, she bowed before Sita.

Maruti was observing all that had occurred. He was debating on how he would approach Sita without startling her. He decided to stay a monkey. At this point, the rakshasis had enough excitement for one night and had dozed off. Sita suddenly felt an unexplainable inner strength. Hanuman began to sing Rama's praises and life story from his birth all the way up to his own journey across the ocean to Lanka. Sita was delighted! She looked up in the tree hoping to see a human figure with deep knowledge but instead saw a cute little monkey smiling down at her. She wasn't sure if it was her imagination or if she was actually looking at Rama's messenger. She had so many questions regarding Rama and about Lakshmana's well being.

Sita wanted Rama to come to her rescue within 2 months, or she said that she'd jump into a fire. On hearing this, Hanuman instantly jumped out to console her, she was taken aback, frightened and doubted if he was some illusion created by Ravana. Hanuman immediately remembered the ring. She was instantly convinced. He asked her to get on his shoulders and he would take a leap back to Rama. He could see the doubt in her eyes, so Hanuman grew to the size of Trivikrama and then shrunk back to the small monkey. Even after that, she insisted that Rama should come with his weapons and fight for her honor & rescue her. Sita gave Maruti a jewel that she had received from her mom. Rama would definitely recognize it. She affectionately called Hanuman, "son", blessed him and requested him to depart immediately. We paused our story here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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We require at least 1 parent inside the ashram during the full duration of the class.
You are free to choose an Adult Study Group or sign up to Volunteer or
Meditate/Read in the Temple.

Required books for Grade 1

My Prayers Book

Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,

Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 18

Hari Om Parents,

The following is what we did during Sunday's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book)
8. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)
14. "Manojavam Maaruta" (page 152 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. Please continue to practice Geeta Chanting slokas with your kids. They have been introduced to slokas 1-16 in Chapter 1 & that will be their requirement for the Geeta Chanting Competition. Please refer to the following website gitachanting.net for the right pronunciation. Most kids have familiarized themselves with the first 3 slokas! Please record videos & send your individual child chanting the shlokas to the Geeta Chanting Team cnjbalaviharhouses@gmail.com to earn house points.

2. We have introduced most of the Dainikaprarthanah (means Daily Prayers) & 4 slokas from the Gurustoram. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer & daily prayer.
3. We did some coloring towards the end of class. If you have some extra time at home, please have the kids complete their coloring pages in their Bala Ramayana coloring books. Some kids have missed a class or 2, we have had a few abbreviated sessions due to other activities and were unable to fit the coloring activity in. **Please stop on Lesson 29.** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
4. Bhajan : We introduced a new Rama bhajan this week. It is on page 141 in the My Prayers book.

After a brief quiz like recap of our story so far, the enthusiastic students were eager to find out what Hanuman had on his mind! Our setting this week began in Lanka, with Hanuman sitting on the wall of the Ashokavana, contemplating his next move. He wanted to make sure that Sita had faith in his abilities. He decided to invite a battle! He grew from the size of the tiny monkey into a huge vanara. As Hanuman grew and stretched he let out a majestic roar that rocked Lanka and even shook the heavens. The lazy rakshasis woke up trembling. Hanuman immediately begins to create havoc. He uproots trees, stomps through fountains, eats the fruits and destroys the Ashokavana. No harm comes to Sita and the ashoka tree that she sat under, making the rakshasis curious about this strange vanara. They hence question her. Sita denies knowing Hanuman and emphasizes that she can't trust anyone as she has been tricked by Ravana's maya before. The terrified rakshasis run to Ravana to report the disaster.

Hanuman sat on the garden's gate and grinned at the mess he had successfully created. At the same time Ravana is furious. He immediately sends a huge rakshasa army demanding that Hanuman be captured and brought in front of him dead or alive. Hanuman grew in size and took them out in a single blow. Then Ravana sends his fiercest rakshasa Jambumaali to face this challenge. Hanuman is enraged when he gets bombarded by arrows from Jambumaali. He leaps on top of a temple, yanks a pillar off of it and hurls it with immense force, smashing his chariot and crushing that rakshasa. He roars out, 'Long live Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva!'. This news reached Ravana and he was beyond furious. He then sends his bold son Aksha. Hanuman sees a young rakshasa prince, he sort of feels sorry for the kid and starts small by just tossing some trees and boulders at him. But the prince was fierce and shot continuous arrows at Hanuman. Then he had to put an end to it and he too ended up lifeless.

The news of Aksha's death saddened and enraged Ravana. Indrajit was Ravana's next line of action. He had beaten Indra in battle and he owned the Bramasthra, Ravana thought that a monkey would be no match to his son. Indrajit took his father's blessings and rode his father's chariot off to defeat Hanuman. This duel attracted the whole of Lanka. The duo were equally matched. Hanuman grew and was glowing brighter than the sun. Indrajit shot one divine arrow after the other and Hanuman was able to answer each arrow with humongous blows. Finally Indrajit decides to use his Brahmastra. Maruti is bound and helpless as the Brahmastra did the job. But he knew that the astra's power would only last for one muhurta. The rakshasas were thrilled to see the monkey bound and motionless. They cheered and wanted to yank him apart and devour him. One of them yelled out that they should probably tie him up tight before they did so. They found jute ropes and tied him up. Unfortunately that took away the power of the astra! Both Indrajit and Hanuman knew that. But Hanuman being the intelligent vanara, wanted to take this opportunity to come face to face with Ravana and serve the duty of being Rama's messenger, so pretended to still be bound by the astra.

Hanuman is dragged into Ravana's court as all the rakshasas are ridiculing him and throwing sticks and stones at him. Hanuman observes the majestic grandeur of his surroundings. Ravana was awestruck seeing this vanara, he was unable to make sense of how this single monkey was able to create this much havoc and was able to take down so many of his brave warriors single handedly! As Ravana is making his own observations, Hanuman too is making his own. He can't understand how all of Ravana's supernatural achievements have gone to his head and has ultimately turned him senseless and wicked! Ravana immediately demands to know who Maruti is and the reason behind the mayhem. The tone of his voice sends shivers down everyone's spine, but Hanuman is unaffected and responds with his chest pumped out. He says that he is Rama's messenger and the Chief Minister of the vanara king Sugriva. The purpose of his visit was to request the return of Sita, as it was an unjust act. He also mentioned that there would be forgiveness involved even at this point. But if the request was denied, he would face a deadly consequence of dealing with Sugriva's army and Lord Rama Himself! On hearing what Hanuman had to say, Ravana was beyond furious. He demanded that the vanara be killed immediately!

Ravana had his younger brother, Vibhishana in his court. He was a good and wise man. He advised his brother that it was against the court's law to kill a messenger. But, he was allowed to punish him for his behavior. Ravana reluctantly agreed. He stated that a monkey's pride is his tail and he ordered it to be tied up in rags, dipped in oil and set on fire. He wanted Hanuman to be paraded in the streets of Lanka, to show everyone what

kind of punishment they could receive for such behavior. Hanuman increased the size and length of his tail every time some rags were tied on to it. Finally after his tail was immensely long, he stopped growing and the rakshasas dipped it in oil and set it on fire. He was paraded throughout Lanka for everyone to see. He was still bound and he kept observing strategic points as he walked and heard all the insults. As they passed the Ashokavana, the rakshasis updated Sita on the happenings. She prayed to Agni, asking to keep Maruti safe and cool. Lord Rama was the only thought on her mind. Hanuman was unaffected by the fire, he continued to think of his Lord and him being the messenger, even the elements couldn't harm him!

At this point, we decided to tell the class the story of when Hanuman was a baby and from inside the cave, he flew towards the Sun, thinking that it was a yummy fruit. Indra saw that the baby was in danger and threw his thunderbolt at Maruti and knocked him out of the sky, breaking his jaw. This was how he got his name. ("Hanu"-jaw, "Hanuman" - big jaw). When Vayu saw what had happened to his baby, he sucked all the air out of the earth and Heavens. He was furious with the world. Then one by one each God granted Hanuman boons to save the life on earth and those of the Devas as well. With all of the boons that Hanuman received, he was deemed deathless and would live on for eternity.

Hanuman had enough of parading, so he decided to shrink into a tiny monkey, got out of the ropes that he was tied up with and then grew back into a huge fierce vanara. He jumped on to the nearest roof top, setting it ablaze. Then he jumped from building to palace to temple to another house, setting everything on fire. Before he knew it, Lanka was burning! Every time he jumped, he yelled out, "Jai Sri Rama! Jai Lakshmana". Maruti made his way to the top of the Trikuta mountain. He dropped his tail into the ocean and put the fire out. He surveyed all the damage from the mountain top and questioned his own actions. He wasn't sure if Sita too may have been hurt in the fire and felt sad. He decided to go and check for himself. As he approached the Ashokavana, he could see that Sita and the tree that she was sitting under was untouched by the fire and it looked like she was protected by a force field. He told Sita that he had taught the rakshasas a lesson and that he'd be back soon with Lord Rama and Surgiva's army. Mother Sita blessed Hanuman.

Hanuman decided to use Mount Arista as his springboard to make his leap and flight back to India. He flew past Mainika waving at her and saying that he has no time to rest. He roared triumphantly as he approached the Mahendra hill. All the vanaras were eagerly awaiting his arrival and immediately embraced him. Maruti's eyes spoke of his victory! The army instantly began contemplating whether they should take the army to

Lanka or to go to Kishkindha to report their findings. They decided that it would be better to give Lord Rama an update they plan their next move. We paused our story here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPNTnZieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zeus7FhUTvnCfUB7BxhnTYFr4IHq5R7mMh5HVwL_8_Q/edit?usp=sharing

We require at least 1 parent inside the ashram during the full duration of the class. You are free to choose an Adult Study Group or sign up to Volunteer or Meditate/Read in the Temple.

Required books for Grade 1

My Prayers Book

Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,

Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 19

Hari Om parents,

We began class with a few prayers:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
5. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
6. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
7. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
8. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)

This week we had our Balavihar Spirit Day! All the students were in high spirits working together in several team building activities, answering a question after completing each task and earning clues. We then put our heads together to solve the clues. Finally we all met in the Temple hall to solve the final clue and passed our answer on to the older

student that used our answer to unlock a treasure chest filled with gold chocolate coins. Everyone enjoyed the day. Please go to the below link to view some pictures from our fun filled day.

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zeus7FhUTvnCfUB7BxhnTYFr4IHq5R7mMh5HVwL_8_Q/edit?usp=sharing

We require at least 1 parent inside the ashram during the full duration of the class. You are free to choose an Adult Study Group or sign up to Volunteer or Meditate/Read in the Temple.

Required books for Grade 1

My Prayers Book

Bala Ramayana Coloring Book

Regards,

Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 21

Hari Om Parents,

Thank you for joining us today for our very first E Balavihar session. It was a pleasure to see all of the kids' smiling faces, oh sooo ready for Balavihar this morning! We had a great turn out today. We actually ended up with a huge virtual classroom instead of our tiny pantry! Thank you for your cooperation with getting the devices and programs set up for the kids. They were well behaved for the most part and adjusted smoothly to our new teaching platform. The kids were pretty patient as I was trying my best to navigate the Whiteboard during the story. We tried our best to replicate/emulate our regular Balavihar class. Kudos to the kiddos!

The following is what we did during today's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)

3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book)
8. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)
14. "Manojavam Maaruta" (page 152 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We sang our Rama bhajan "Jaya Jaya Tulasi" (page 141 in My Prayers book) twice. This is a relatively new bhajan for most of the kids as we had only a few kids during our previous 2 classes.
2. We have introduced most of the Dainikaparthana (means Daily Prayers) & 4 slokas from the Gurustoram. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer & daily prayer.
3. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om's kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets the mind and improves concentration. Today I muted everyone so that the kids wouldn't have any potential distractions from each other. 2 of the students got the count correct! Most of them were very close, as there was an echo, I told them that if they had a few more than the actual count, they were also correct. They seemed happy.
4. We did some coloring towards the end of class. If you have some extra time at home, please have the kids complete their coloring pages in their Bala Ramayana coloring books. Some kids have missed a class or 2, we have had a few abbreviated sessions due to other activities and were unable to fit the coloring activity in. **Please stop on Lesson 31.** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
5. We had some technical difficulties with the audio for the Geeta chanting, we hope to have that issue resolved prior to our next class.

We began our story with a brief recap. I left the platform unmuted and we got tons of responses to the recap questions! Hanuman has returned to Kishkindha and with Jambavan's persuasion, Hanuman humbly narrated his wild expedition in Lanka and he reported that he has successfully found Sita to his Lord Rama. He had confronted Ravana and, as Rama's messenger, requested him to return Sita to her husband and to beg Him for His forgiveness. Ravana denied doing so and he was furious about how Hanuman had destroyed his favorite Asokavana. He was ready to kill Hanuman when Indrajit successfully captured him and brought him into Ravana's court. But Vibhishana, Ravana's brother, said it was not just for a King to kill a messenger, instead, he said a punishment was acceptable. He then had Hanuman's tail set on fire. Hanuman burnt Lanka, went to the Ashokavana to check on Sita's safety and was relieved to see her safe inside her forcefield. He had offered to carry her back to Rama. She denied that, and told him that Rama had to come to Lanka, fight and defeat Ravana and then take her back with him. Hanuman agreed to her request and flew back to India and returned to his vanaras with the news. On hearing this news, Rama was in a very emotional state not knowing how he would be able to repay his devoted messenger. He fondly embraced Hanuman. Then Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva & his massive Vanara Army head to the tip of India. Hanuman lifted Rama on his shoulders and Angadha lifted Lakshmana on his to make sure that they kept a vanara's pace as they marched on.

Our setting today began with the vanara army close to the shoreline. They are all looking at the massive Indian Ocean as they are planning their next move. As they are doing so, they spot five dark clouds in the sky, swiftly approaching their location. Their immediate thought was that rakshasas were heading over to fight them, so they got prepared. Vibhishana was not afraid of being attacked and he spoke from the sky saying that he tried his best to advise his evil brother Ravana to change his mind and return Sita, but his efforts were futile. So he said that he and four of his like minded rakshasas are coming to seek asylum at Rama's feet. Sugriva was very suspicious and thought they were coming to spy on them, so he went to warn Rama. Rama in turn decided to seek advice from his army leaders, and they also sided with Sugriva and wanted to get ready to fight or at least test their real motive. Rama then turned to Hanuman for advice. Hanuman respectfully addressed Lord Rama, saying that he knew all the answers as he was the Lord himself. But putting his bhakthi and those thoughts aside, Hanuman gives his opinion that Vibhishana and his men are arriving unarmed and thus we should trust them. Rama was happy and agreed. He then went on to say that it was against his Dharma to turn away anyone that comes to Him for shelter.

Sugriva was still suspicious. He went on to doubt Vibhishana and justifies it by saying that he had sided with Ravana for so long...Rama reminds Sugriva that not long ago, he too had sided with his own brother Bali! On hearing that he calms down and accepts his misthought. The talks of brothers reminds Rama and Lakshmana of their faithful and loving ones that they soon hope to reunite with. Soon Vibhishana arrives and takes blessings from Rama. Lakshmana and Angadha are asked to bring seawater for Abhisheka and Rama crowns Vibhishana as King of Lanka. Vibhishana then shared details of Lanka and strategies that were being planned there.

The army was nowhere close to figuring out how to cross the ocean. So some of the elders advised Rama to undertake a fast to request the sea God for help. Three days passed and when there was still no response, Rama was furious and wanted his bow and arrows to make sure that everything in the ocean perished. As soon as the wrath of Rama was felt by the sea God, he rose up and prevented any more destruction. The sea God had to take a stand and tell Rama that he could not go against his nature and dry up for them to cross over. But he agreed that with Rama's name on anything that was tossed onto him, would float and he would hold each object together like glue! Nala was appointed as the chief engineer. The Vanara army immediately began building the bridge with 100% enthusiasm, that kept growing as they kept building and marching towards Lanka as they chanted "Rama, Rama, Victory to Rama"! They were able to achieve this incredible feat in just 3 days. They finally succeeded in ascending to the shores of Lanka. We paused our story here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 22

Hari Om Parents,

The following is what we did during today's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book)
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9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)
14. "Manojavam Maaruta" (page 152 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We sang our Rama bhajan "Jaya Jaya Tulasi" (page 141 in My Prayers book) twice, we repeated it once and sang it together 1 time.
2. We have introduced most of the Dainikaparthana (means Daily Prayers) and 4 slokas from the Gurustoram. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer and daily prayer.
3. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om's kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets the mind and improves concentration. Today I muted everyone so that the kids wouldn't have any potential distractions from each other. 2 of the students got the count correct! Most of them were very close, as there was an echo, I told them that if they had a few more than the actual count, they were also correct. They seemed happy.
4. We introduced "Likita Japa" to the kids today, we taught them how to write "Rama" in Hindi and had them continue to write "Rama" as they listened to Swamiji's Geeta chanting. The kids are welcome to practice "Rama" likita japa during the week if they would like to do so. They were happy to show off their

pages today. If the kids have some incomplete pages in their coloring books, they may color them, **Please Stop on Lesson 31.**

We began today's story with a brief recap of what we heard during our previous class, of how Rama along with Sugriva and his vanara army built a bridge across the Indian Ocean and made their way on to the shores of Lanka.

Today's setting was in Lanka. As Rama along with the vanara army approach Lanka, Malyavaan, Ravana's wise grandfather tries in vain to convince his grandson to do the right thing and save his people. Ravana was blinded by his desire for Sita and would not listen to anyone. He strategically posted his army in all different directions along with his trusted leaders of Prahasta, Mahaparsva, Mahodara, his own brave son Indrajit and Virupaksha incharge of each location. Ravana stayed at his Northern gate position. The vanaras who had arrived observed the positioning from the Trikuta mountain. From this vantage point, Rama was also observing the beauty and splendor of Lanka and he became sad that he would end up destroying this beautiful kingdom! Rama also positioned his army led by Nila, Angada, Hanuman, Sugriva, Jambava and Ravana's own brother Vibhisana to lead each direction forward. Rama and Lakshmana took their righteous postings at the Northern gate. The two armies were all set.

All of a sudden, Sugriva was so agitated and he decided to fly out of his army to confront Ravana! They were both equally matched wrestlers, but Ravana always had tricks up his sleeve. So Sugriva decided to retreat back to his army. The vanara king was questioned by Rama for his sudden disappearance. Rama after hearing about Sugriva's hasty actions explained that a king should never risk his life and cross enemy lines before the battle commences! Sugriva apologised and begged for forgiveness. Rama then called on Angada to be his messenger and his last resort prior to declaring war and death to Ravana and the rakshasa race. Ravana was enraged on seeing the messenger and he would not listen to reason. He called on all his rakshasas to attack Angada. Two of Ravana's strongest rakshasas attacked Angadha. The mighty Angadha was able to lift both of them high up in the air and dropped them violently. They fell to the ground with a massive thump. On his way down to the ground after dropping them, Angadha decided to damage and break two of the palace's turrets. The messenger escaped and went back to his position along with the vanara army. Ravana saw the destruction of his 2 palace turrets as an ill omen. He then went up to his observation tower to see Rama and the strength of his mighty army.

Ravana was filled with dark determination. His thoughts focused on his evil ways of trickery. He had reached a point of no return. He had to conjure a plan to persuade Sita

to change her mind and have Rama leave heartbroken without a fight. He asked his sorcerer Vidyujihva to make an exact replica of Rama's head. He then stormed into his Ashokavana and victoriously screamed at Sita showing her the head and claimed that he had defeated Rama and his army. He demanded Sita to be his queen. He placed the severed head before Sita. She believed it was her beloved husband and she began lamenting uncontrollably. At that moment, the vanaras had begun their invasion and his army generals needed him immediately. As Ravana departed to answer his call, the fake head of Rama went up in smoke. That illusion was no more! Sita was bewildered. Saramaa, the good rakshasi then told Sita that it was Ravana's evil maya in action. Due to Sita's pure soul and constant prayer and thought of Lord Rama, it sounded like the vanara army and Rama were finally here to rescue her. Sita felt hope again as simultaneously the rakshasa race was trembling with fear. We paused our story here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEIU0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zeus7FhUTvnCfUB7BxhnTYFr4IHq5R7mMh5HVwL_8_Q/edit?usp=sharing

Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 23

Hari Om Parents,

The following is what we did during today's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book)
8. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)

9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)
14. "Manojavam Maaruta" (page 152 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We sang our Rama bhajan "Jaya Jaya Tulasi" (page 141 in My Prayers book) twice, we repeated it once and sang it together 1 time.
2. We have introduced most of the Dainikaprarthana (means Daily Prayers) and 4 slokas from the Gurustotra. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer and daily prayer.
3. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om's kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets the mind and improves concentration. I muted everyone so that the kids wouldn't have any potential distractions from each other. Almost ALL of the students got the count correct! The rest of them were very close. They all were visibly thrilled!
4. We practiced our "Likita Japa" with the kids today, we taught them how to write "Rama" in Hindi and had them continue to write "Rama" as they listened to Swamiji's Geeta chanting. The kids are welcome to practice "Rama" likita japa during the week if they would like to do so. They were happy to show off their pages today. If the kids have some incomplete pages in their coloring books, they may color them, **Please Stop on Lesson 31.**

We began our story with a brief recap of where we were last week.

Our setting was in Lanka. Both sides are prepared for the war to commence. Rama signals the vanara army to attack. They are completely pumped up and energized chanting "Victory to Rama, Jai Sri Ram, Long Live Rama", they approach the city gates. Ravana and his rakshasa army are ready to attack with full force, charging out with their mighty weapons. As the vanaras arrived empty handed, they made use of rocks, boulders, mountains, trees, columns, pillars, etc. as weapons. The generals from both sides were equally matched. Angadha was assigned to take his stance against Indrajit, the mighty son of Ravana. Angadha killed Indrajit's charioteer and his horses. He then smashed Indrajit's chariot as well. Furious at the outcome, Indrajit decides to use some

black magic to make himself invisible. He decided to then go and torment Rama and Lakshmana by shooting arrows at them from all different directions. After that he sent serpent arrows at the duo, those serpent arrows tied them up and made it impossible for them to move or talk!

Sugriva and the vanara army were grief stricken! They assumed the worst had happened and started to cry in defeat. Vibhishana was not convinced as he was still able to see luster in the faces of the brothers. Indrajit thought that his hasty master plan had worked and went to rejoice with his father. Ravana was so pleased that he started to party himself and ordered his trusted rakshasi to accompany Sita on the flying Pushpa vagana to witness their victory. He demanded that the rakshasi to now convince Sita to be his queen. Sita could not bear the sight and lamented uncontrollably reliving all the hardships that they had faced to get themselves to the current situation. Trijata, the good rakshasi too thought like Vibhishana and tried to console Sita by saying that the duo don't seem to be dead. She went on to say that there was a vibrant glow radiating from their faces. These consoling words gave Sita hope and she continued to pray for their recovery and victory.

At this point, the ocean waves rose to incredible heights and the winds started roaring! Garuda the king of the birds arrived amongst the vanaras and immediately the serpents disappeared in fear! Garuda softly brushed his wings along the brothers' faces and whispered to Rama that he was an old friend of his and that they would meet again after the war is over. The duo awoke with immense strength and immediately began planning their new war strategies. There was a roar of joy amongst the vanaras that reverberated across Lanka. Immediately Ravan climbed his tower to see what was going on and was astonished to see that the brothers were alive and beyond looking well! Sita too could hear the joy and was immediately filled with a revived sense of hope. We paused our story here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzIeDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 24

Hari Om Parents,
The following is what we did during today's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book)
8. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)
14. "Manojavam Maaruta" (page 152 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We have introduced most of the Dainikaparthana (means Daily Prayers) and 4 shlokas from the Gurustoram. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer and daily prayer.
2. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om's kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets the mind and improves concentration. I muted everyone so that the kids wouldn't have any potential distractions from each other. Almost ALL of the students got the count correct! The rest of them were very close. They all were visibly thrilled!
3. Please practice "Likita Japa" with the kids, we have taught them how to write "Rama" in Hindi and please have them continue to write "Rama". The kids are welcome to practice "Rama" likita japa during the week if they would like to do so.

They also get points for submitting their likita japa as well. If the kids have some incomplete pages in their coloring books, they may color them, **Please Stop on Lesson 31.**

4. We had a very special and fun filled class today. 3 JCHYKs joined us to teach and recap our Balaramayana story so far. They had created a Kahoot! Quiz with 22 multiple choice questions that the kids were able to answer from their devices. For most of the class, this was their first exposure to Kahoot! From the cheering, smiling and enthusiasm, I felt like the class was a grand success! There were a few trick questions that were in there, the kids along with their parents were able to figure them out. It was so nice to see that the class had retained all that they have learnt in Balaramayana so far. The quiz aptly left off where we will be restarting our story next week. Thank you to the parents for joining today's class and helping the kids with the quiz. We were very fortunate to get a great group of JCHYKs come in and spend time with us today.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWlNPTnZieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 25

Hari Om Parents,
The following is what we did during today's class.
Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)

6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book)
8. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)
14. "Manojavam Maaruta" (page 152 in My Prayers book)

Due to some technical difficulties, our class was unfortunately cut a bit short. We rolled right into our story after a brief recap of where we were prior to Spring break. The kids were able to remember our story so far. Our setting was in Lanka on the battlefield.

Ravana decided to send his fierce warrior Dhumraaksha to defeat Hanuman on the western side. Unfortunately for the rakshasas, Hanuman was no match for them. With one swing of a humongous tree towards Dhumraaksha's head, he was slain. The extremely agitated rakshasa king then sent the huge and terrible looking Vajradamstra to the southern side to take on Angadha. Both generals and their armies fought with all their might but Angadha had the upper hand and defeated Vajradamstra. Ravana was furious and was getting increasingly afraid of the situation, but had no intention of giving up. He was very stubborn that he would never bow before Rama. Prahasta, his commander-in-chief too, had advised Ravana to return Sita to Rama. At this point, Akampana, who was unshakeable, had also been defeated by Hanuman. With no other choice, Prahasta went to war against Nila and he too was no match for the vanaras! It was a gruesome scene, with death and disaster everywhere.

The enraged Ravana got himself prepared to head out for war. He looked majestic, radiant and terrifying with his 10 heads glowing, he led what was left of his rakshasa army out for war. Vibhishana, pointed out his brother to Rama as he rode in his chariot in their direction. Rama was awestruck by Ravana's presence and he viewed him with admiration, but had to quickly pocket that image as he was the cause of all of this destruction and life loss. Ravana strode in and swatted the fierce vanaras like they were mere flies. Nila was taken down in a single shot, Hanuman put up a brave fight then Lakshmana was wounded and fell unconscious. Hanuman swiftly escorted him off the battlefield.

Rama and Ravana are face to face for the first time. Rama wasted no time, he aimed his first arrow at Ravana's crown, took that out. Then his next arrow took out his chariot

and his last arrow took out all of his weapons. Ravana stood there in astonishment stripped of all his powers and nearly destroyed. Rama looked at him kindly and requested his enemy to go home, take rest and return the next day! Rama had so much admiration for the fierce but evil warrior that stood before him.

Ravana had never tasted defeat before. He was totally dejected. But he knew that he had a secret weapon that he had not used so far...his brother Kumbhakarna! He decided to wake the sleeping giant who had been cursed to 6 months of sleep and 6 months of being awake during which he primarily consumed tons of food. Trying to wake up his brother during his sleep cycle was no easy feat. There were drummers, trumpet blowers and many more making as much noise as possible to wake him up. They even tried sending elephants to trample on top of him to make him budge. Then they tempted him with the aroma of his preferred foods. After a prolonged effort to awaken Kumbhakarna, he finally wakes up. He gets dressed and rolls into his brother's assembly hall and his movements can be felt throughout Lanka. Ravana explained the grave situation that they were in and had NO support from his brother! Kumbhakarna called his brother out for his despicable act of kidnapping another man's wife! He also blamed all the people around him for praising Ravana and giving him false hope. But, he agreed to fight for his brother's honor and headed out decked in gems and the finest garments.

The vanaras were terrified by the sound of Kumbhakarna approaching. He looked like a giant mountain roaring towards the battlefield. He grabbed and consumed a multitude of vanaras. He smooshed several of them merely by accident too. Angadha, Sugriva and Nila were tossed around and knocked unconscious. The rakshasas were thrilled to see the vanara king down. Eventually Sugriva gained consciousness and attacked Kumbhakarna, using his long sharp nails to injure him enough to cause discomfort. Hanuman too played his role in slowing the tyrant down. When Lakshmana came forward, he avoided him and wanted to fight Rama...feeling that his end was close, deciding that he wanted to face Rama for that. Rama then pulled out his most powerful astaras, aimed and took Kumbhakarna down part by part. Finally his huge head fell and made an immensely loud thud that reached Ravana's ears, throwing a devastating blow at Ravana. He fainted in disbelief. He lamented about not listening to reason and to his brother Vibhishana as well. Ravana's sons came to console him and they bravely set out to fight for their father's honor and to avenge the death of their uncle. Unfortunately they met the same end as their predecessors. Ravana for a brief moment questioned his decision of kidnapping Sita and he tried to make sense of who Rama, a mere human being really was. He had a momentary vision of Rama actually being Lord Vishnu Himself! But, Ravana was determined to go down fighting. We paused our story here.

As we discussed the parts of the story's happenings, we continued to write our Likitha Japa. The kids were happy to show the different ways that they wrote "Rama" today. We discussed the art work project of picking a line from our Chinmaya Mission Pledge and making a drawing of it. The kids seemed excited about it! I would love to see their creations next week. Please do reach out to us if you have any questions.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWlNPTnZieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 26

Hari Om Parents,
The following is what we did during today's class.
Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book)
8. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)

14. “Manojavam Maaruta” (page 152 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We have introduced most of the Dainikaprarthanah (means Daily Prayers) and 4 slokas from the Gurustoram. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer and daily prayer.
2. We sang our Rama bhajan “Jaya Jaya Tulasi” (page 141 in My Prayers book) together today. Most of the kids have gotten familiar with the bhajan and it's sounding great.
3. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 “Om’s kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets the mind and improves concentration. I muted everyone so that the kids wouldn’t have any potential distractions from each other. Almost ALL of the students got the count correct! The rest of them were very close. They all were visibly thrilled!
4. We did some coloring towards the end of class. If you have some extra time at home, please have the kids complete their coloring pages in their Bala Ramayana coloring books. **Please stop on Lesson 35.** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
5. Please have the kids continue writing their Likitha Japa. You can send photos of them in to earn house points.

We began today’s story with a brief recap. Most of the kids were ready to jump in and answer questions. Our setting started in Ravana’s palace, where he was totally dejected. Indrajit approached his father for his blessings to head out to the battlefield. He had his uncle Kumbhakarna and his beloved brothers on his mind as he set out. He took down the vanaras that charged at him with no effort. He then immediately shot poisonous darts at Rama and Lakshmana. They immediately fell into a coma like unconsciousness. That was the unfortunate case of the rest of Sugriva’s army as well. Seeing the success of the fallen enemies, Indrajit went to share his news of success with his father. Ravana was thrilled and praised his beloved son and called him the savior of Lanka.

On the battlefield, as everything seemed silent, Jambavan was able to slowly move and with all of his strength he called for Hanuman, asking if he was alive. Hanuman immediately came to his side. Jambavan then whispered specific directions to revive

Rama and Lakshmana. He told Maruti to fly to the Himalayas, to locate the Kailasha and Rishaba mounts. He then described four herbs that could be found in between the two mounts. Hanuman departed instantly and located the hill but was unable to distinguish between all the herbs so he decided to take the whole mountain! He swiftly returned to Lanka. Rama, Lakshmana and the vanaras were revived. Rama immediately made a plan to sneak into the city during the night and to set everything on fire. All the rakshasas began to scream and run helter skelter in fear.

Ravana was able to hear the cries of his rakshasas and cheering of the vanaras. The infuriated king called upon Kumbha and Nikumbha, the sons of Kumbhakarna, to head out and take the enemies down. They strutted out and faced Sugriva and Hanuman. Even though they put up a good fight they were no match for the vanara king and Hanuman. As the news of their defeat reached Ravana's ears, he again called upon his beloved son Indrajit. The vanaras tossed trees and boulders at Indrajit, annoying him immensely. He lost his temper and reverted to what he knew best...black magic! He created a Maya Sita, put her in a chariot and killed her for everyone to see. He got an instant reaction. Rama was inconsolable as he dropped his bows and arrows. Lakshmana couldn't speak and the vanara army was speechless. Sorry was everywhere.

Vibhishana went to Rama and tried to console him by saying that there is no way that his nephew could have killed Sita. This is most likely an act of black magic as Indrajit was very well versed in that craft. He also said that Indrajit is probably trying to buy time as he may be performing an asuric sacrifice. His advice was to send Lakshmana to stop Indrajit immediately as if that sacrifice is completed, no one, not even Rama would be able to defeat him. Lakshmana, Hanuman and a group of vanaras set out to fight Indrajit. Lakshmana broke Indrajit's chariot, making him come down to fight on foot. The battle was intense. Lakshmana took out his powerful Indra astra, with that Indrajit's head was chopped off. It fell onto the battlefield with such a loud thud that Ravana knew instantly what the outcome was.

Highly infuriated and deeply saddened, Ravana was unable to control himself. He did not know what he was going to tell Mandodari. In a heated rage, Ravana stomped out of his palace towards the Ashokavana. He claimed that the Maya Sita was the reason why his Indrajit is dead, so he was going to kill the real Sita! One of Ravana's ministers blocked his way and FINALLY questioned his ethics! On hearing reason, Ravana sheathed his drawn sword and prepared himself to face Rama. We paused our story here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Year End Celebration:

As we are nearing the end of our story, we have some special year end activities and projects planned. We will require help and **support from the parents** to pull this off.

- Please record video clips (single shloka per clip please) of the kids chanting our daily prayers, Gita chanting and/or our Tulsi bhajan. Every child must have one recording of Sri Rama Rama Rameti (I hope that all the kids have memorized it), then pick one more shloka from our daily prayers to chant. The hope is to have all the shlokas from our daily prayers picked by at least 1 student and compiled so we may need to have a sign up for picking the 2nd shloka.
- The Pattabhishekam is scheduled for May 31st. The suggestion is to make this a family activity. As our year end stage show is unfortunately not possible, let's try to make the best of our family time.
- It would be great to have the kids pick any character (or stick with the character that your child was assigned to) from the BalaRamayana and dress up for class on the 31st. Take a picture of your child dressed up and send them to me. The picture may be taken on the 31st or prior to that if you are trying the costume out.
- Please try to have a picture of Ram Parivaar or Ram Pattabhishekam printed out.
- Please try to make something special as a Prasad offering for that day. It may be sweet or savory. It would be exciting for the kids to be a part of that kitchen activity. If the kids are involved in making the prasada, please take a picture of that and send it to me as well.
- After the story is completed on the 31st, let's try to have a small altar ready with the picture and prasada in front of it.

- I would love to see how creative the kids (along with the family) can get with their dressup, altar set up and prasad.

Week 27

Hari Om Parents,

The following is what we did during today's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book)
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13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)
14. "Manojavam Maaruta" (page 152 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We have introduced the Dainikaparthana (means Daily Prayers) and 4 shlokas from the Gurustoram. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer and daily prayer.
2. We sang our Rama bhajan "Jaya Jaya Tulasi" (page 141 in My Prayers book) together today. Most of the kids have gotten familiar with the bhajan and it's sounding great.
3. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om's kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets the mind and improves concentration. I muted everyone so that the kids wouldn't have any potential distractions from each other. Several students got the count correct! The rest of them were very close. They all were visibly thrilled!

4. We did some coloring towards the end of class. If you have some extra time at home, please have the kids complete their coloring pages in their Bala Ramayana coloring books. **Please stop on Lesson 36.** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
5. Please have the kids continue writing their Likitha Japa. You can send photos of them in to earn house points.
6. We had a brief meeting with the parents after class to discuss our Year End Celebration.

We began today's story with a brief recap. Most of the kids were ready to jump in and answer questions. Lanka was in a very bad place with signs of war everywhere. Our setting started in Ravana's palace, where he was totally dejected, feeling shame, revenge and grief. He was slowly coming to a realization that he may have done something wrong. The stubborn nature of Ravana, even at this point prevents him from surrendering to Rama. He had made up his mind to go down fighting. He had a new divine chariot made for him, he loaded it up with all of his weapons. He dressed up in his best silk attire and adorned himself with jewellery made of gold and precious stones. All his ten heads were shining brilliantly. He knew in his end was near, but yet he put on a brave face and rode out towards the battlefield. The people of Lanka watched their king pass through the city and they were saddened as they too knew that it would be their last glimpse of their proud warrior.

Ravana terrorized the vanaras as he sped through the battlefield with his ten heads blazing. His intent was to fight Rama and anyone else in his way was taken down with immense power. In a similar fashion, Rama's arrows were tracking and taking down the rakshasas in every direction. Ravana's rage doubled when he encountered Vibhishana. Lakshmana tried to block Ravana only to be taken down. Hanuman immediately moved him off the battlefield and used the herbs that he had from the mountain to revive him. Then the duo who were equally matched faced each other. The waters stood still, the wind stopped and the sun became dark as signs of ill omens for Ravana. The devas and gandharvas watched, holding their breath and not even blinking.

Rama shot one divine astra after the other, injuring Ravana but was unable to take him down. Every time he shot an arrow and took off one of his heads, another one grew back! Ravana laughed hideously every time it happened! Rama was bewildered. Indra sensed Rama's distress and decided to send down a divine chariot along with Maatali, a charioteer. Both Rama and Ravana were wounded. Ravana could sense that his final hours were approaching. Maatali prompted Rama to use his divine astra that he had received from Sage Agastya. Rama aimed the divine arrow at Ravana's chest and

released it. It flew like a hissing serpent and pierced Ravana's chest. That humongous and radiant figure came down with a thunderous bang that shook the earth and heavens. The vanaras celebrated and the remaining rakshasa's scattered away. The devas showered flowers from above. The sun began to shine, the trees swayed in the breeze, birds chirped and Mother Nature was happy. Lakshmana, Sugriva, Hanuman, Jambavan, Angadha and Vibhishana looked at Rama with a sense of love, joy and admiration!

Vibhishana looked at his brother's motionless body with sadness and pity. But he refused to perform his final rites. Rama was by his side to counsel him by saying, "Your Brother is My Brother Too"! He said that Ravana died a brave warrior, on hearing those words, Vibhishana agreed. Lanka was in a disastrous state. Vibhishana was crowned King. Mandodari was heartbroken and she had supported her dear husband's every move, though she had tried multiple times to change his mind, she decided to enter Ravana's funeral pyre. We paused our story here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 28

Hari Om Parents,
The following is what we did during today's class.
Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)

5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book)
8. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)
14. "Manojavam Maaruta" (page 152 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. We have introduced the Dainikaparthana (means Daily Prayers) and 4 slokas from the Gurustoram. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer and daily prayer.
2. We sang our Rama bhajan "Jaya Jaya Tulasi" (page 141 in My Prayers book) together today. Most of the kids have gotten familiar with the bhajan and it's sounding great.
3. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om's kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets the mind and improves concentration. I muted everyone so that the kids wouldn't have any potential distractions from each other. Several students got the count correct! The rest of them were very close. They all were visibly thrilled!
4. We did some coloring towards the end of class. If you have some extra time at home, please have the kids complete their coloring pages in their Bala Ramayana coloring books. **Please stop on Lesson 37.** Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
5. Please have the kids continue writing their Likitha Japa. You can send photos of them in to earn house points.
6. We had a mini discussion regarding how many instances can we recall from our story where someone had to agree to follow instructions given to them even though they were hesitant to do what was asked of them. The kids did an amazing job! They came up with Dasharatha, Bharatha, Lakshmana (Golden Deer), Maaricha (Golden Deer), Kumbakarna (when asked to fight Rama), Hanuman (when Sita tells him not to harm the rakshasis who were guarding Her), Lakshmana (when Sita asks him to kindle a fire for Her).

7. The kids are all very excited about getting set for our year end celebration!

We began our story with a brief recap of where we were last week. It was really awesome to watch the kids who were all very enthusiastic about giving answers! With Ravana defeated, Rama entrusted Hanuman to deliver the news of their victory to Sita. Hanuman approached the Ashoka vana, glancing around at the rakshasis that were guarding Sita. As soon as he saw Sita, he immediately bowed before Her and got Her blessings. On hearing the news of their victory, Sita was flushed with a sense of immense happiness. She shed some tears of joy and immediately wanted to be in the presence of Rama. Hanuman told Her that she was to be decked up and to arrive to see Rama looking like a queen. She agreed to do so.

In the meanwhile, Hanuman wanted to take down all the rakshasis that were keeping guard of Sita. They began to tremble with fear. Sita immediately intervened by saying that it was not their fault that they were guarding Her. They were just following their king's orders. Sita did not want them hurt and requested mercy. That showed how noble She was. Hanuman humbly agreed.

Sita bathed and dressed up. She had signs of immense suffering in her eyes but she looked like she had matured gracefully from a young princess to a queen. She was carried to the battlefield in a palanquin. As She slowly got out, She had tears in Her eyes as She envisioned her "Aryaputra" for the first time in a year. Everyone was anxious to see the person that they had risked their lives to rescue. To everyone's shock, Rama made no attempt to approach Sita to embrace or console her. He stood there still, cold and unmoved by Her presence! He justifies Himself by saying that He has fulfilled His duty of a Kshatriya, by taking Ravana down. He says that Sita is now free to go wherever She may please. He then says that She has been away from Him for way too long and that was not right. Lakshmana is truly appalled by what he was witnessing. The rest of them who were there in their presence and the Lords witnessing from above were all awestruck. Sita was furious beyond words. She immediately called Him out for His un-kshatriya-like reaction. She said if He thinks that He's the proud son of Dasharatha, She reminded Him that She's the daughter of the wise Janaka. Sita felt so insulted that she demanded Lakshmana to collect wood to kindle a fire.

Lakshmana still could not believe his ears! He takes one more look at Rama's emotionless and stern face, then heads out to fulfill Sita's demand. He prepares and kindles the fire, Sita paced around Rama three times and She still sticks with Her claim that She only had Rama on Her mind during the entire duration of their separation. She prays to Lord Agni and enters the fire. Everyone watched with their jaws hanging and

feared for what would happen next! Sita remained cool and untouched by the flames. Lord Agni emerged from the fire and put Sita's hand in Rama's and testified to Her purity. Rama lovingly accepted Her. Brahma and the other devas showered their blessings as everyone on the battlefield witnessed Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi hand in hand in front of them. We paused our story here.

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 29

Hari Om Parents,

The following is what we did during today's class.

Shlokas:

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book)
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book)
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book)
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book)
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book)
8. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book)
9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book)
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book)
14. "Manojavam Maaruta" (page 152 in My Prayers book)

Activities:

1. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer and daily prayer.
2. We sang our Rama bhajan “Jaya Jaya Tulasi” (page 141 in My Prayers book) together today after we finished our Pattabhishekam part of our story. Most of the kids have gotten familiar with the bhajan and it's sounding great. Thank you all for sending in your child's or your children's recordings.
3. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 “Om's kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets the mind and improves concentration. I muted everyone so that the kids wouldn't have any potential distractions from each other. Several students got the count correct! The rest of them were very close. They all were visibly thrilled!
4. We had our very successful “YEAR END CELEBRATION!” All the kids dressed up as either the character that they were assigned to prior to us beginning our distance learning or they had the choice of picking any character from the Balaramayana. Their smiling faces and excitement as they showed up for class said it ALL!
5. As a part of our year end celebration, families were asked to set up a small altar with a picture of Ram Parivaar or Ram Pattabhishekam. The kids were told to make or help their parents make a simple prasada as an offering at the end of our story and virtual pooja. Apart from the fact that we were unable to physically be together, we all were still able to receive Lord Rama's blessings as we felt the presence of Lord Hanuman as we completed the tail end of our story together.
6. Once our short and simple pooja was complete, we all had prasada and shared our prasada virtually :)
7. We colored our LAST page in our Balaramayana coloring book towards the end of class. If you have some extra time at home, please have the kids complete their coloring pages. Please reiterate that the kids are recalling the story as they are coloring.
8. Please have the kids continue writing their Likitha Japa. You can send photos of them in to earn house points.

We began our story with a brief recap of where we were last week. It was really wonderful to watch the kids all very enthusiastically answering the questions! Their keen concentration to hear the end of the story was surprising and obviously noticeable! Our setting this class began in Lanka, where Rama has defeated Ravana, Vibhishana has been crowned as the new king of Lanka and finally after such a long duration of

separation, Rama and Sita have been reunited! Rama's fourteen year exile to the forest is nearing its end. With four days left, Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Hanuman, Sugriva and Vibhishana mount the Pushpaka Vimana and begin their journey up North. As their journey continued they could see flashbacks both good and bad as they flew over the Dhandaka forest. The whole class enthusiastically participated in recapping their favorite occurrences. It was delightful to watch how the kids were able to take a walk down memory lane. The passengers of the Pushpaka Vimana eventually reached Sage Bharadwaja's ashram and messengers were sent to inform Guha and Bharatha of their arrival.

Ayodhya could not be more happy! At this point, Bharatha and Rama meet, and the outpouring of brotherly love was unmatched. Everyone was crying tears of joy. The four brothers sought the blessings of their beloved Guru Vasishata who had been eagerly awaiting their arrival. The queens could not contain their happiness. Kausalya, Sumithra and Kaikeyi embraced, kissed and blessed their four princes. Bharatha immediately requests Rama to take back what was rightfully His from the beginning, namely His crown, His people, His kingdom and His throne. Everyone could see Rama's slippers sitting on the throne, as Bharatha took care of all of the responsibilities but never once thought of taking the throne for himself. Bharatha truly wanted to be relieved of his duties. It was heartwarming to watch the kids keenly listen to the story with their eyes wide open:)

Rama and Sita were ushered to their chambers to be dressed and prepped for the long awaited coronation ceremony. They had special Pattabishekam attire ready for them. Sita was decked out in jewelry and was glowing beautifully like a queen after all the hardship she had encountered.

Rama and Sita were seated on the throne, Lakshmana stood a few paces away from Rama. Bharatha and Shatrughna stood holding the royal white umbrella behind Rama. Sugriva and Vibhishana were in charge of the fans that they held and gently waved, making sure that the Royal couple were comfortable. Vedic mantras were being chanted by priests. They were all blessed with holy water and flower petals. Fragrant incense sticks were burnt and the people of Ayodhya were overjoyed. Guru Vasishtha had the honors of crowning RAMA as KING. Everyone's long awaited dream had finally become a reality. There were signs of joy everywhere. There was a cool breeze and the sweet smell of fragrant flowers drifted through the air. The talented musicians were playing joyful tunes. Sita was pleased by everything that was going on and was particularly grateful to Hanuman who was kneeling at Rama's feet. She took a pearl necklace and placed it around Hanuman's neck. Hanuman gracefully accepted it but

clasped onto Lord Rama and Sita's feet making a humble request. He wanted forever love of Rama's feet and wanted his mind to never waver from them. He also asked that he may forever live on to hear the story of Lord Rama wherever and whenever it is sung with whole hearted love and devotion. Lord Rama smiled and blessed Hanuman. Everything was set right. All was well in the world. Rama and Sita live on in our hearts and the ever present Hanuman was watching over us as we completed our story of Balaramayana!

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOSwh_aQgtnmw47uNFPLybwYI-Y753e9SxrW57FdEI_U0mkXzEIUJojDKa6ecT81A?key=bmlZWNPtNzieDF4Wk9BZjQ1eTQ3S05KTm51VHIR

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Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan

Week 30

Hari Om Parents,
The following is what we did during today's finale class.
Shlokas:

To change things up for our last class, we had the kids lead the shlokas that they had picked to record. Wow were they excited for that!

1. "Om Saha navavatu" (page 8 in My Prayers book) - Shriya
2. "Vakrathunda Mahakaya" (page 27 in My Prayers book) - Kartik
3. "Karegre vasate" (page 11 in My prayers book) - Aanvi R., Anvi & Rewa
4. "Akanda-mandalakaram" (page 61 in My Prayers book) - Sidd
5. "Ajnana-timirandhasya" (page 61 in My Prayers book) - Pranav
6. "Gururbrahma" (page 61 in My Prayers book) - Arpita & Shreyan
7. "Thvameva Maathacha" (page 62 in My Prayers book) - Aashni & Pranav
8. "Samudra vasane devi" (page 11 in My Prayers book) - Kaushik
9. "Saraswathi namasthubyam" (page 12 in My Prayers book) - Anuj, Snithik, Smitha & Kavya

10. "Subham karothe kalyanam" (page 12 in My Prayers book) - Vedya
11. "Karacharana krithamva" (page 12 in My Prayers book) - Vedika
12. "Bhramaarpanam bhrama havih" (page 12 in My Prayers book) - Pranav
13. "Srirama Rama Ramethi" (page 129 in My Prayers book) - All together
14. "Manojavam Maaruta" (page 152 in My Prayers book) - Chinmai

Activities:

1. Please have the kids make it a habit to chant the above shlokas every morning, (lighting the lamps / evening) after their bath/shower. This will help them learn, memorize as well as develop a lifelong habit of morning prayer and daily prayer.
2. We sang our Rama bhajan "Jaya Jaya Tulasi" (page 141 in My Prayers book) together today. The bhajan sounded great.
3. Thank you all again for sending in your child's or your children's recordings and photos!
4. We played the Concentration Game. After the chanting of 3 "Om's kids keep their eyes closed. They count the number of stones being dropped into a box during the quiet time. Later they give the count of the stones dropped. The game quiets the mind and improves concentration. I muted everyone so that the kids wouldn't have any potential distractions from each other. Several students got the count correct! The rest of them were very close. They all were visibly thrilled!
5. Please have the kids continue writing their Likitha Japa. Maybe have a notebook or a stack of papers in your pooja room, so the kids can write after their morning/evening prayers.
6. We all had a conversation about the Slideshow & Movie that they received. They were all happy to see their progress and to see them together chanting shlokas and singing the bhajan.
7. If you have not done so already, please take approximately 16 minutes to spend with your child to watch what we put together as a 1st grade remembrance video. It comprises of 4 segments
 - A photo slideshow that culminates in our dress up, altar set up and prasad pictures which is approximately 9min 23sec
 - Our 3 part recordings of My Prayers, Tulsi bhajan and Sri Rama Rama Ramethi is about 7min 10sec
8. Here is the Google Drive Link of our 1st grade Sunday A.M. remembrance video https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cNzwqHvwKzfQ7GQ5BEDr0_eipx1MYZLb/view?ts=5edbcd07
9. Please do share the above link with family and friends. We know that the kids were really excited about getting on stage, unfortunately that wasn't possible so we made you this modified year end celebration.

10. As our class continued today, we had each child share their favorite part of the BalaRamayana. It was so fun and exciting how the kids were able to choose different incidents and explain that part of the story. We were really happy that kids remembered those parts!
11. Today, instead of writing Likita Japa on paper, we all shared the whiteboard and wrote Rama, Jai Sri Ram, Sri Rama Jeyam...in our preferred color or style so it felt like we were together!



12. Towards the end of class, we had the kids share their drawings/artwork/creative crafts or anything they wanted to share with the class. The kids were excited to do so. We are so proud to have had such a talented group of kids in our class this year.

It was a bittersweet moment when the kids started to say that they would miss us. But the fact of the matter is that they have successfully completed 1st Grade Bala Ramayana and have graduated today. Congratulations to the Class of 2020. We wish the kids the very best as they move on to Superman Hanuman in September. We hope that we will be bumping into all of you when things settle down and we are back at our Vrindavan ashram for Balavihar. Thank you for sharing your kids with us on Sundays. Have a wonderful Summer!

Please go to the link below to check out the pictures from this week's class

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Regards,
Keerthi Kobla and Dipti Chauhan