31st Jan 2009

This year Vasant Panchami comes on 31st Jan 2009, the day when most start any new project related to education & learning. **Vasant Panchami** sometimes referred to as **Basant Panchami** or **Shree Panchami**, is a Hindu festival celebrating Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, music and art. It is celebrated every year on the fifth day of the Indian month Magh (January-February), the first day of spring. Traditionally during this festival children are taught to write their first words; Brahmins are fed; ancestor worship (Pitr-tarpan) is performed; the god of love Kamadeva is worshipped; and most educational institutions organize special prayer for Saraswati. The color yellow also plays an important role in this festival, on this day people usually wear yellow garments, Saraswati is worshipped dressed in yellow, and yellow sweets are consumed within the families.

Also known as **Saraswati Puja**, this festival is celebrated in Nepal, India and Bangladesh to invoke wisdom and consciousness in human beings. Apart from wisdom, *Saraswati* is also the deity for fine and performing arts. The day is also called *Basant Panchami* which falls in Falgun (*Phalgun* in Hindi) month of Bangla calendar; that is February of the Gregorian calendar. In West Bengal, Saraswati puja is performed in Hindu households and also in schools and colleges. Women are dressed in yellow (basanti) colored sari. With Her grace, the mute, it is believed, have been able to speak and people have been blessed with the ability to write or compose poems. Musicians sing and many even choose to perform on this day at the puja ceremony. Instrumentalists have puja performed for their instruments. Apart from art and culture, Goddess Saraswati also showers Her blessings for the education of children.

Notebooks, pencils and pens are kept at the Devi's feet for blessings and then used by the students. The notice board of the school provides special instructions on this day asking the students to write their names; address and the roll number on a piece of paper and put it in the hundi after praying for success! It is believed the Goddess blesses them for good and positive results.

Her expression is so serene and calm even as She is majestic. She is seated on a white lotus in Padmasana, adorned by a pure white silk sari, has a book in Her lower left hand, Her lower right hand showing the chinmudra, Aksharamala in Her right upper hand, and Amrithakalasam in Her left upper hand. Both eyes are full of compassion.

The vehicle assigned to each of the three goddesses also symbolically represent their special powers. Goddess Saraswati is the consort of Lord Brahma (Lord of Creation) and is the Goddess of wisdom and learning. Saraswati is the one who gives the essence (sara) of our own self (swa). She is considered as the personification of all knowledge - arts, sciences, crafts and other skills. She has a beautiful and elegant presence, is pure white in color, clad in a white sari, seated on a white lotus, representing purity and brilliance. She has four hands representing four aspects of human personality in learning; mind, intellect, alertness

and ego. She has the sacred scriptures in one hand and a lotus (a symbol of true knowledge) in the second. With her other two hands she plays the music of love and life on the veena.

She is dressed in white (sign of purity) and rides on a white goose (swan). The swan is known for its peculiar characteristic of being capable of separating water from milk, indicating that we should possess discrimination in separating the bad from the good. The seat being a lotus or peacock implies that the teacher is well-established in the subjective experience of truth. When sitting on a peacock she reminds us that wisdom suppresses ego.

Like Brahma, she is not worshipped much in temples. However, every year Saraswati Pooja (Navarathiri) is celebrated by people all over India, be it students, workers, craftsmen, businessmen offering their prayers for a successful and fruitful year. However, Saraswathi does have a temple in Koothanur in Tanjavur district (Tamil Nadu).There is an important Saraswati Temple in Basar at a distance of 40 km from Nizamabad in Adilabad District, Andhra Pradesh on the banks of Godavari River.

Source:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basant_Panchami

Rama Rahasya Upanishad

8. On another occasion answering Vibheeshana's question "How can your angas be made easy to worship? Please tell me an easy way."
Rama replied, "The japa of my name "Rama" removes all sins. Suppose someone is meditating on my six lettered mantra or reads my Gita or thinks of me with devotional fervor, he would get the same effect. He would get rid of the five great sins, viz. killing of father, killing of mother, killing of brothers, killing of teachers, killing of husband or even other well-known great sins, if one repeats my six lettered mantra ten million times. He also would get the immortal and everlasting bliss.
Vibheeshana again asked him, "What would be the way for people who are not capable of doing It.?"

Rama replied "they can either read my Gita, my thousand names or meditate on my Viswa Roopa or my 108 names, or repeat my name 100 times, or read the king of stotras written by sage Narada, or read the great prayer called mantra raja stavam written by Hanuman, or read the prayer to Sita or daily pray to me by reciting my name; they will doubtless attain Me." ~

Rama Rahasya Upanishad