

*Answer the following questions based on the cartoon movie on Lakshmi.*

1. What does the word SRI mean?
2. Where did Lakshmi come from?
3. For what three things is Lakshmi known for?
4. Explain the story of Vishnu in the form of half-lion-half-man. What was his purpose?
5. Explain the story of Vishnu in the form of the dwarf. What was his purpose?
6. How did Rohini get back their wealth and royal life again? How did she please Lakshmi?

## Lesson 7 Lakshmi (Laxmi) Consort of Vishnu



Lakshmi sitting on the lotus

Laxmi (Lakshmi), the consort of Narayan (Vishnu), is the most sought after goddess of the Hindu pantheon. She is riches personified- and is therefore the right consort for the preserver of the universe--- Vishnu. She is his power of action and the owner of all the riches that Vishnu needs--- to look after the **world**. No one can be rich and consequently powerful without her benevolence not even Narayan.

Laxmi came out of the ocean when at the beginning of **time** the vast ocean was churned to get the **nectar** hidden in its depths out for the benefit of the **devtas**, who wanted to become immortal, because the **asurs** who were stronger to them in physique and strength were ever after their blood. Although they were devta they were still afraid of them-- so they went to Narayan to seek his help. Narayan advised them to find the **amrit** (nectar) from the sea and drink it--then no one would be able to destroy them and they would become immortal. The asurs heard about it and demanded a share of the amrit; thus it came about that both the devtas and asurs decided to churn the ocean together and share the nectar. Narayan quietly promised the devtas that he would himself play such a trick that the devtas would get the entire benefit of the amrit and the asurs would get nothing at all time of distribution.

Many valuable gifts the ocean gave to the asurs. Then all of a sudden like a streak of lightning appear a most beautiful and gracious woman sitting on a lotus, carrying a garland of the same flower. Everyone stopped working as they were bewitched by so much beauty. Everyone wanted her, but she was the one to choose a husband for herself as women in those days were the ones who selected their life partners and were given full freedom in their choice. Everyone tried to please her with beautiful gifts and great praise in an effort to entice her, but she found some fault or the other in all until she saw Narayan--- calm and serene and without passion that seem to affect all others. Laxmi walked straight to him and put the garland around his neck and stood by his side but the Vishnu placed her on his chest and they both glowed like lightning in a thunder storm. After that he could do nothing without her.

There is a story about the plight of Narayan without her at **Tirupati temple** in Tamil Nadu in the south of India. Narayan to this day is asking his devotees to give him wealth and in exchange he will fulfill any and every desire of the devotees--- the more he gives the more he will receive, and very quickly at that, because the Vishnu is in great debt!!

## SYMBOLISMS IN LAXMI

- a. FOUR ARMS & HANDS  
-----  
-----
- b. LOTUS BUD  
-----  
-----
- c. FULL-BLOOMED LOTUS  
-----  
-----
- d. GOLD COINS  
-----
- e. RED SAREE  
-----
- f. GOLD LINING  
-----
- g. OWL AS HER VEHICLE  
-----
- h. PALM RAISED UP  
-----
- i. PALMS LOWERED DOWN  
-----
- j. SITTING ON THE LOTUS  
-----  
-----
- k. TWO ELEPHANTS SPRAYING WATER  
-----  
-----  
-----

### Symbolisms

Full-bloomed lotus and holding a lotus bud, which stands for beauty, purity and fertility. Her four hands represent the four ends of human life: **righteousness, desires, wealth, and liberation** from the cycle of birth and death. Cascades of gold coins are seen flowing from her hands, suggesting that those who worship her gain wealth. She always wears gold embroidered red clothes. Red symbolizes activity and the golden lining indicates prosperity. Two elephants are often shown standing next to the goddess and spraying water. This denotes that ceaseless effort, in accordance with one's dharma and governed by wisdom and purity, leads to both material and spiritual prosperity.

## Review Questions

*Answer the following questions in your notebook.*

1. Why Lakshmi is depicted as a rich and wealthy goddess? Where does her wealth come from?
2. Why does Vishnu need her wealth? Why is this god after money and wealth?
3. How did Vishnu lose his wife and in return became bankrupt?
4. If Lakshmi is back with Vishnu, why do humans have to give money to payback all his debt to Kuber?
5. Why is Vishnu known as a "house-husband" (living with his in-laws)?
6. What exactly is the celebration of Diwali? What happens on the Diwali night?
7. What do you need to do if you want Lakshmi to visit your house/home on Diwali night?
8. Which Indian caste tend to worship her more? Why does Ganesh need to be worshipped first before worshipping Lakshmi?
9. Is Diwali a part of Indian culture or Hindu custom? Why?
10. When (date) is the Diwali celebration held each year?

---

a. righteousness, desires, wealth, liberation; b. fertility; c. beauty, purity; d. worshippers gains wealth; e. activity; f. prosperity; g. quick to leave; h. bestowing blessings; i. pouring wealth and material blessings; j. connected to supreme power; k. ceaseless prayer and effort.



All this came about because once the great *rishis* decided on performing a great *yagya* (sacrifice) and at the end of it Rishi Brigu was given the task of finding out who amongst the three great gods--- Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva--- was fit to receive the first offering. At the end of the yagya, Brigu took the offering to *Brahmaloka* in search of Brahma, but found him engrossed with his wife Saraswati and this did not even hear him come! This annoyed the rishi and he proceeded to *Kailash* in search of Shiva. He too was busy making love to his wife Parvati and paid no heed to Rishi Brigu. Containing his anger he thought he will still try out Vishnu and went straight to *Vaikunt*, the abode of Vishnu and Laxmi. They also seemed to be oblivious to everything except themselves. The rishi turned to go in great anger at the disrespect shown to a learned man by even Vishnu and Laxmi, but at that moment Vishnu saw him and caught hold of his feet. Brigu was so incensed that he kicked Vishnu on his chest, still the god did not let go off his hold and appealed for forgiveness since even gods cannot show disrespect to the great amongst the mortals. This annoyed Laxmi who told Narayan in no uncertain terms that he had no business to plead with a person who had kicked her dwelling place --the heart!--but Narayan kept on asking for forgiveness from Brigu. So Laxmi left Vishnu and Vaikunt and returned to her father--the ocean.

Vishnu suddenly lost all his glory and riches and became very poor and powerless to do anything anymore. He loved Laxmi very much. So he made his way somehow to the ocean to find his wife and bring her back.

The god of the ocean refused to part with his daughter and return her to one who had scant regard for her.

For a long time he did not choose to hear the pleading of the distraught husband but finding that even his daughter was really very fond of Vishnu and didn't really want to forsake him - he relented but on the condition that Vishnu would give him riches beyond human imagination and dreams - before he could take her again. Poor Vishnu didn't know where to get the money that his father-in-law demanded. Without Laxmi he was penniless. He thought hard and suddenly thought of Kuber - Ravan's half-brother - who had so much wealth that no one could fathom. He at once went to Kuber. After listening to Narayan's tale of woe Kuber agreed to loan him the money on a very heavy interest, which had to be paid back before the

cycle of time - before pralaya vanquished everyone and everything. Vishnu promised that he will do so.

That is how Narayan made his abode at **Tirupati** and made it the center of collection of funds from the human race. Everyone would get their wishes fulfilled in return for funds, the more one gives, the more quickly his desire will be fulfilled.

Now in Kalyug the last quarter of time he still owes Kuber the interest on the loan and therefore he is in a hurry to get over with his commitment. Of course Laxmi is now with him. Therefore, there is no death of money flowing into the hundies of Tirupati, but the amount of interest is huge and no one knows exactly what remains to be given still. Therefore, those who go to Tirupati temple in the town of **Tirumalai** and give generously, are also rewarded generously. Even prized possessions are accepted if they injure no one. Therefore people have their hair shaved as offering since one of the most prized and beautiful possession of a human being is his or her hair; except for the looks it does not harm the person as it grows again. Tirupati is the most worshipped shrine in India today and Vishnu is the richest deity of the world because the amount received by the **hundies** (a large cloth bag with its opening high but absolutely open). People put millions in quietly, and no one is the wiser as to who has put what in it. At the end of the day the temple trustees count up the takings and with it are run big hospitals, universities and schools and other charitable institutions to benefit the human race.

Of course Vishnu receives it and is happy for it is being used for the benefit of the people of whom he is in charge and for whom in any case he has to provide all the facilities required.

Laxmi has become one of the most worshipped deity by the Hindus as wealth and beauty are the most desired by the people, although Ganesh has to be worshipped first, a picture of idol of Laxmi will always be in every household even if Narayan is not there. On **Diwali** it is Ganesh, Laxmi that are the paramount deities of the day. Ganesh -- because no worship can take place without first worshipping him and Laxmi because it is her day (night).

Laxmi is a docile and obedient wife and seldom gets annoyed with her husband but has been known to curse him now and then. Laxmi accompanies her spouse in his **avtars** and was **Sita** with Ram and **Radha** with Krishna in the most well-known avtars of Narayan.

She is shown sitting or standing on a lotus when by herself and has four hands, one holding the open lotus and other may hold a golden pitcher with mango leaves and a coconut on top of it. The third and fourth, both pointing down, having gold coins falling continuously from them. When shown with Narayan she is shown with only two hands. In some images she is supported by Narayan with his left arm around her waist while she has her right arm round his shoulder. She is also shown with Narayan reclining on **Adishesh** floating on the eternal waters after the dissolution of the world. Laxmi and Vishnu are also shown as one and their combined image called Laxmi Narayan emphasizing that they are one and cannot be separated.

Laxmi is called by various names in the Hindu scriptures she is **Shree (Sri, Shri)** - meaning glory and Indira because she was very pleased with Inder, the chief of the devtas, singing her praise. **Kamla** and **Padama** as she came out of the ocean sitting on a lotus carrying also a lotus garland. **Lok Mata** because she is the one who gives riches for the humans to be able to live.

Although Vishnu's abode is Vaikunt, he is most often floating on the ocean bed reclining on the serpent **Adishesh**. The name Narayana means one who resides in water and since Laxmi is the daughter of the ocean Vishnu becomes **Ghar Jamai** (house husband) and if he can be one, so can a human being. No stigma is attached to him on this account in the view of the Hindu thought and its scriptures.

Laxmi is the chosen deity of the **Vaisyas** or the trader class and every shop or trading place or a home of a **Vaisya** is never without a picture of Laxmi along with Ganesh.

All Hindus worship Laxmi as, without her, one is helpless. **Diwali** is the most lavish festival of the Hindus. It is celebrated day and night when Laxmi is worshipped with great joy and gusto. Houses are repainted and cleaned thoroughly. Lamps are lighted and the houses decorated with shining and beautiful things. Everyone is dressed in shining and clean clothes, and jewels, gold chains in the necks, arms and ear of the women of the house since Laxmi loves glitter and loves to be amongst people of prosperity and riches. They have to be very careful with her, and not let her slip out of their hands. She can come through ways of **adharm** and can leave by the way also, therefore, gamble with care for the jingles of coins delight Laxmi but remember she is **Rama** and **Chanchal** and is quick to leave. Her vehicle is the **Owl**.