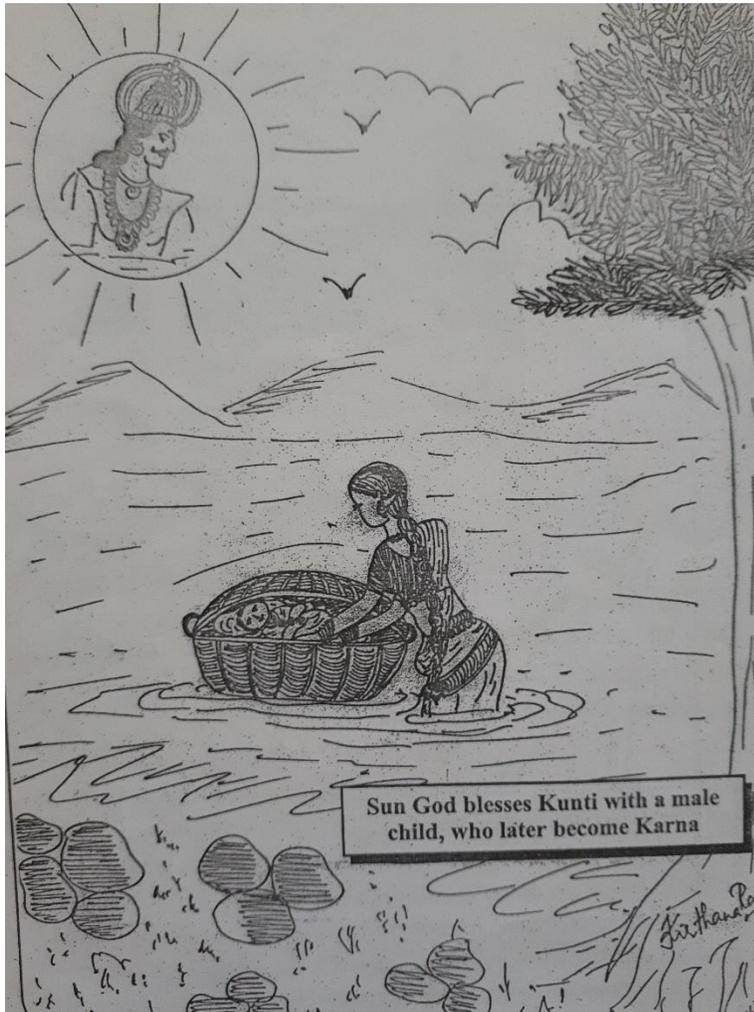


Story of Ratha Sapthami

Surya or Sun God is a heavenly body. He is represented as moving in a one wheeled chariot drawn by seven horses and chariotered by Aruna. Surya is believed to be the son born of Kasyapa and Aditi. Chaya or Sanjana is Surya's principal wife by whom he had Yama (God of death) and Yamuna and also Sani (Saturn). He is also said to be the father of Vaivasvata Manu, the founder of Solar race (Surya vamsa) to which Lord Sri Rama belonged.



There is also a story that he is the father of Karna of Mahabharatha fame, by Kunti. Kunti was the adopted child of Kunti Bhoja. Sage Durvasa, supremely pleased with the service of Kunti initiated her into a mantra powerful enough to summon any God at her command. To test the efficacy of this mantra, one day she happened to look at the bright sun and chanted the mantra. What a wonder! Sun God appeared in the sky dressed in wonderful garment, with a divine armour and beautiful ear-rings made of gold. Though Kunti pleaded with him that she called him out of curiosity, Surya blessed her with a son, who was to be one of the greatest warriors in the world, Karna. The story goes, that out of fear and social stigma, Kunti put the child in a box and set it sail in the river. Later the child was picked up in the river Ganges and he grew up

along with the Kauravas.

According to mythology, the Sun rides in his chariot every half year, north or south of the equator. The period of duration of this passage, half year is the time from one Solstice to another, the equinoctial and solstitial points. The progress of the Sun towards the south of the equator is called "Dakshinayana" and that to the north of the equator is called "Uttarayana".

Rathasapthami happens to be the day when the Sun's chariot is believed to turn around from Dakshinayana to Uttarayana.