

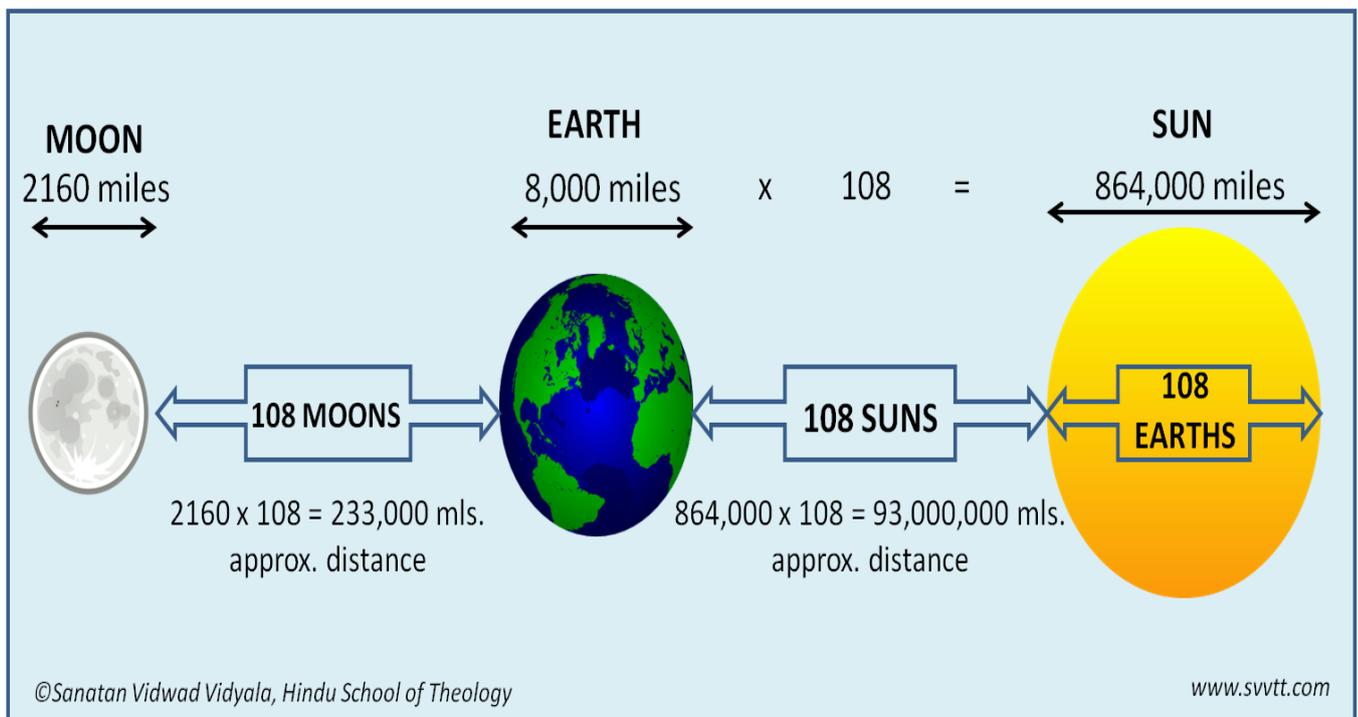
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUMBER 108

Number 108 is just like any other number. Is it? We come across this number while handling many disciplines. When we see number of beads in a Japamala, number of names of God and Goddess, number of Sivalayas and Durgalayas as 108, always wondered there should be some prominence for 108 which I do not know. A brief explanation of the use and importance of this number in various schools of topics is given in succeeding paragraphs. Some details might look factually wanting. Intention is to convey information with respect to this subject prevailing in the environment. Readers may explore further.

1. Astronomy.

- (a) Diameter of Sun. The diameter of the sun is 108 times the diameter of the Earth.
- (b) Distance to Sun. The average distance from the Sun to the Earth is 108 times the diameter of the Sun.
- (c) Distance to Moon. The average distance of the Moon from the Earth is 108 times the diameter of the Moon.

Relationship of distance between Sun, Moon & Earth



2. Sri Chakra Yantra. The powerful Sri Chakra yantra intersects in 54 points each with a masculine and feminine quality, totalling to 108.
3. Astrology. In Indian astrology we have 12 houses and 9 planets. 12 times 9 equals to 108.

4. Breathing Cycles. In Tantra, it is estimated that every day we breathe 21,600 times out of which 10,800 are solar energy and 10,800 are lunar energy. Multiplying 108×100 is 10,800.
5. Chakras in Human Body. There are 108 chakras working in human body. Though there are more, 114 chakras are said to be important. Out of these 114 chakras, 2 are working outside our physical body. Among the rest 112, we can work with 108 only. Balance 4 chakras are developed through the processing of the 108. As per Yogasastra, there are 7 basic chakras which are most significant, namely Mooladhara, Swadhishtana, Manipuraka, Anahatha, Vishudhi, Anja and Sahasrara.
6. Karanas in Natya Shastra. The famous saint Bharata wrote, "The Natya Shastra" which has 108 karanas (Movement of hand and feet).
7. Sanskrit Alphabets. There are 54 letters in Sanskrit each can be mentioned as masculine (Shiva) and feminine (Shakti) aspect, totaling to 108.
8. Upanishads. There are 108 Upanishads.
9. 9 Times 12. Both of these numbers have been said to have spiritual significance in many traditions. 9 times 12 is 108.
10. Power of 1, 2 and 3 in Maths. 1 to 1st power = 1; 2 to 2nd power = $4(2 \times 2)$; 3 to 3rd power = $27(3 \times 3 \times 3)$. $1 \times 4 \times 27 = 108$
11. Harshad Number. 108 is a Harshad number, which is an integer divisible by the sum of its digits (Harshad is from Sanskrit, and means 'great joy')
12. Desires. There are said to be 108 earthly desires in mortals.
13. Lies. There are said to be 108 lies that human tell.
14. Delusions. There are said to be 108 human delusions or forms of ignorance.
15. Heart Chakra. The chakras are the intersections of energy lines, and there are said to be a total of 108 energy lines converging to form the heart chakra. One of them, sushumna leads to the crown chakra, and is said to be the path to Self-realization.
16. Pranayama. If one is able to be so calm in meditation as to have only 108 breaths in a day, enlightenment will come.
17. Sri Yantra. On the Sri Yantra there are marmas where three lines intersect, and there are 54 such intersections. Each intersection has masculine and feminine, Shiva and Shakti qualities. 54 times 2 equal 108. Thus, there are 108 points that define the Sri Yantra as well as the human body.
18. Pentagon. The angle formed by two adjacent lines in a pentagon equals 108 degrees.

19. Time. Some say there are 108 feelings, with 36 related to the past, 36 related to the present and 36 related to the future.
20. River Ganga. The sacred River Ganga spans a longitude of 12 degrees (79 to 91) and latitude of 9 degrees (22 to 31). 12 times 9 equal 108.
21. Gopis of Krishna. There were said to be 108 gopies or maid servants of Krishna.
22. 1, 0, and 8. Some say that 1 stands for God or higher Truth, 0 stands for emptiness or completeness in spiritual practice and 8 stands for infinity or eternity.
23. Silver and the Moon. In astrology, the metal silver is said to represent the moon. The atomic weight of silver is 108.
24. Meditations. Some say there are 108 styles of meditations.
25. Paths to God. Some suggest that there are 108 paths to God.
26. Jain. In the Jain religion, 108 are the combined virtues of five categories of holy ones, including 12,8,36,25, and 27 virtues respectively.
27. Sikh. The Sikh tradition has a mala of 108 knots tied in a string of wool, rather than beads.
28. Buddhism. Some Buddhists carve 108 small *Buddhas* on a walnut for good luck. Some ring a bell 108 times to celebrate a new year. There are said to be 108 virtues to cultivate and 108 defilements to avoid.
29. Chinese. The Chinese Buddhists and Taoists use a 108 bead mala, which is called *suchu*, and has three dividing beads, so the mala is divided into three parts of 36 each. Chinese astrology says that there are 108 sacred stars.
30. Stages of the Soul. Said that Atman, the human soul or center goes through 108 stages on the journey.
31. Praiseworthy Souls. There are 108 qualities of praiseworthy souls.
32. Japan. In Japan, at the end of the year, a bell is chimed 108 times to finish the old year and welcome the new one. Each ring represents one of 108 earthly temptations a person must overcome to achieve nirvana.
33. Astrology. In astrological traditions, as a multiple of 12 and 9, 108 represents the nine planets in the 12 zodiac houses. In Sanatana Dharma there are 27 Nakshatras (constellations) where every living thing is born in anyone of these Nakshatras. It is the inter-weaving of geometric patterns that gives the Nakshatras their awesome significance, and also their relationship to the number 108. In Vedic Science Astrology, each of these 27 constellations is further divided into 4 parts, each consisting 3 degrees and 20minutes; these sections are known as *charan* or *padam* that is considered a step.

The total number of 27 constellations multiplied by 4 quarter each totals to 108. This signifies the evaluation to the divine path.

34. Rig Veda. The appearance of the number 108 in the Rig Veda, the first of the four books of the Vedas is at many instances. The Vedas are the scriptures that form the foundation of the early religious beliefs of Hindus. There is evidence that Vedic age astronomers made careful observations of the sun, the moon, and the planets as far back as the third millennium BCE and this distance-diameter relationship can be determined without any instruments. Of course we can't be sure that this remarkable astronomical fact played any role in the selection of 108 as a sacred number, but 108 (and multiples/variations of it) make appearances in the Rig Veda and in the structure of the document itself. For example, there are 10,800 stanzas in the Rig Veda and 108 is important in various aspects of the design of the Vedic fire alters that are outlined in the document.

35. Japamala. The number 108 is considered a sacred number in many religions, when it comes to the number of beads in the Japamala. Having seen the significance of 108 in various examples quoted above, it makes sense to understand why the number of beads in Japamala is 108. In addition there would be one larger bead-Meru-, which is not part of the 108. It is not tied in the sequence of the other beads. It is the guiding bead, the one that marks the beginning and end of the mala. {The Rig Veda is a collection of mantras or hymns which were intended to be said aloud and were meant to symbolically take one to the sky (i.e. to the home of the Gods). Indian thought takes the outer cosmology to be mirrored in the inner cosmology of humans, so the number 108 is taken to represent the 'distance' from one's body to the God within. The 108 beads of the mala then map the steps between the body and the inner sun. One is making a symbolic journey from the physical body to the heavens – traversing this distance of 108 from the earth to the sky – as they repeat 108 repetitions of their mantra.}

108 signifies the wholeness in many fields of topics. Science, Astronomy, Divinity etc. are among a few to make it a perfect totality. For the inquisitive minds, our ancestors have given us much to search and research.

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