

How were the Weekdays Named?



A week, sometimes called as a 'sennight', is a period of seven days usually reckoned from midnight on Saturdays. These seven days are known by different names. But thousands of years ago the division of time was of the month only. After a long time, man felt the necessity of fixing days for marketing, trade, religious activities and rest. In the beginning, at some places, every tenth day was fixed for these activities. At some other places, one day after every seven or every five days was fixed for such activities. In Babylonia, the number seven was regarded as sacred by the ancient Babylonians and therefore every seventh day was treated as a special day. The Egyptians also adopted the seven-day system. The 4 phases (new moon, quarter moon, full moon, last-quarter) of the moon take approximately 7 days each. This fact must have given man the idea to divide time into weeks of 7 days.

The Egyptians named the seven days after the names of the sun and the five planets, and the moon. The names being Sunday, Monday, Marsday, Mercury day, Jupiter day, Venus day and Saturday. The Romans also adopted this seven-day system. The present names of the weekdays are derived from the Anglo-saxon system. The days have been named after the names of their gods. The day named after the Sun God is called 'Sunnandaeg' or Sunday. The moon's day is 'Monandaeg' or Monday. Similarly the day named after the planet Mars is called 'Tiwesdaeg' or Tuesday. Instead of Mercury's name, that of God Woden was given to Wednesday. Jupiter's day became the God Thor day 'Thordaeg' or Thursday, the day of Venus was named after the wife of God Odin, Frigg as 'Friggdaeg' or Friday and Saturn's day is 'Saeterndaeg' or Saturday. A day used to be counted as an interval between the sunrise and the sunset, but the Romans counted it from midnight to next midnight. This system is now prevalent in almost all the countries of the world.