

Dada Bhagwan Parivar's

August 2022

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AKRAM Express



Happy

FESTIVALS

Happy Festivals

Editorial

Friends,

Festivals are an opportunity for us to have fun and enjoy ourselves; an excuse to take a break from routine life, and celebrate. However, did you know that there is a purpose behind each festival in our country?

In this issue, we will learn about the purpose behind some of the festivals that are celebrated in India. At the same time, we will find out about the connections between festivals, seasons and health. Do Dada, Niruma and Pujiyashree also celebrate festivals? In their vision, what is the main intention of these festivals? So let's get the answers to many such interesting questions and while celebrating the different colours of each festival, we will add the colour of right understanding.

-Dimple Mehta

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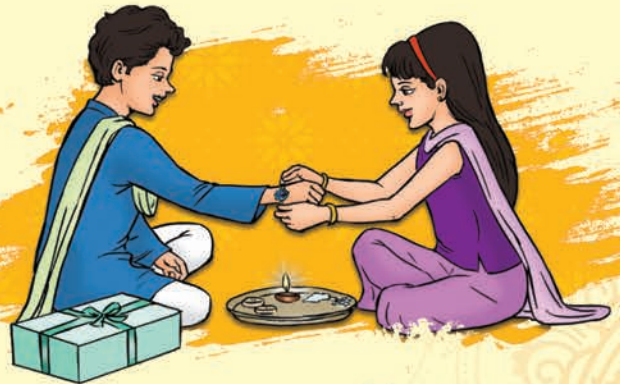
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Raksha Bandhan

Gnani Says...

On the holy day of Raksha Bandhan (which literally means 'bond of protection'), the sister ties a *rakhi* (sacred thread) around her brother's wrist. The brother then takes on the responsibility of protecting the sister.



Back in the olden days, there were times when the women of the village tied a *rakhi* on a gangster or a robber and his whole outlook would change.



He would say, "Sister, now I will not let anybody touch a single hair on your head." The villagers wouldn't dare trouble the sister. The 'brother' would protect her for life. Such is the holiness of this day and the significance of protection.



On the day of Raksha Bandhan, we will tie the thread of protection on Simandhar Swami, Dada and Niruma.

Upon tying the thread of protection on Simandhar Swami, we will pray that in the next life we find refuge at His divine feet, and that He graces us with ultimate liberation (*Moksha*).

Upon tying the thread of protection on Dada Bhagwan, we will pray that He keeps us under his protection. We will follow his principles and make spiritual progress.

Upon tying the thread of protection on Niruma, we pray that she protects us whenever we are in trouble and that, by following Dada's principles, we complete all our karmic accounts here and be granted a place at the divine feet of Lord Simandhar Swami. Up until we attain final liberation, we will definitely continue to have Simandhar Swami's, Dada's and Niruma's protection. All we need from our end is the intent to never go in the wrong direction.



THE UNIQUE WAYS OF THE GNANI...

Once, Pujoyashree's sister came to tie a *rakhi*. At that time Pujoyashree said, "Go and tie it on Simandhar Swami. I also tie it on Him. God is the one who will protect us."

In this way, Pujoyashree showed his sister the right way to secure protection.



JANMASHTAMI



The eighth day of the month of Shravan (in the Hindu calendar) is the holy day of Lord Krishna's birth. This day is known as Janmashtami. Lord Krishna was born on this day around five thousand years ago.

Lord Krishna was born inside a prison on a dark night. When he was born, all the guards fell asleep, the chains broke, and the doors opened. Similarly, when a Gnani is born, they remove the darkness of negativity within us, and by breaking down the wall of 'Mine-Yours', they give us a taste of freedom.



GNANI SAYS...

Lord Krishna is known as a Vasudev. A Vasudev is one who is very powerful. He ruled over half of the world.

Disciples used to ask Dadashri why was Lord Krishna so fond of the peacock feather? Dadashri would reply that

the special thing about Lord Krishna was that throughout

his life, he was not fond of anything except the Soul. Lord Krishna had a tremendous intent for world salvation. Let's worship Lord Krishna while recognising him in that form.



SHARAD POONAM

Sharad Poonam is a festival of enjoying *garba* (traditional Gujarati group dancing) and eating *dudh-pauaa* (flattened rice soaked in milk).

It is believed that the rays emanating from the moon on the night of Sharad Poonam are like nectar. On that night, rice pudding is made and placed in the moonlight. The moonlight of Sharad Poonam will imbue the milk and rice with special healing properties.

During this season it is hot during the day and cold at night. This could lead to illness. Eating flattened rice in sweet milk prevents illness and keeps the body healthy. In a cold climate, exercises that make you sweat are also considered beneficial. Hence the significance of doing *garba* on the night of Sharad Poonam.



In the olden days, disease epidemics would break out during the monsoon season. When the monsoon was over, everyone would celebrate Navratri. 'Nav-ratri' means 'new-night'. Everyone who survived the epidemics would celebrate their 'new' night. The reason being that the bad days were over and the good days would now start. They would do *garba* as a way to worship the Mother Goddess and receive her blessings.





DIWALI

There are many festivals in India, but Diwali has a special significance. Diwali is also known as Deepawali. 'Deep' means lamp and 'awali' means row. Deep + awali = Deepawali, which means rows of lamps.

It is believed that on the day of Diwali, Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after fourteen years in exile. To welcome him, every house in the town was decorated with lighted oil lamps, thus creating the appearance of rows of lights.

Gnani Says...

Lord Mahavir attained *Moksha* on the day of Diwali. A short time later, Gautam Swami, who was the main disciple of Lord Mahavir, also attained enlightenment. By lighting the lamp we aim to light up the inner lamp of our soul. The main purpose is to achieve final liberation.

The Unique Ways of the Gnanis

Dadashri came to a conclusion about fireworks. Does the king set off the fireworks himself or does he get the servants to do it? No king has ever set off fireworks himself. They always get the servants to do it. Therefore Dada would sit and enjoy while others lit the fireworks.



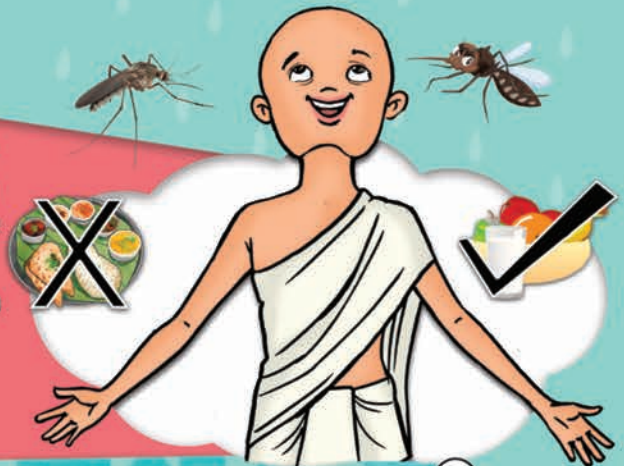


Absolutely New and Different!



Most festivals of the Vaishnav, Jain and Shiv religions take place during the four months of the monsoon season.

The reason for this is that during the rainy season, mosquitoes increase in number and health deteriorates. The ability of the body to digest food decreases because of the humidity in the air. During this time, if you eat less, your body's power to fight against disease will be stronger.



Therefore, the saints and sages of ancient times set up most of the festivals during the monsoon season. During this time they advised people to fast, do *ekadashi* (a special diet where only fruit, vegetables, and milk products are eaten) or eat only once a day. And at the same time to do devotional singing and worship.



The purpose of eating or not eating certain foods during festivals, is for maintaining good health. If the body stays healthy it can carry on moral duties and do more for the self and for others as well. Thus, all the festivals are connected to the triad of seasons, health and worship.



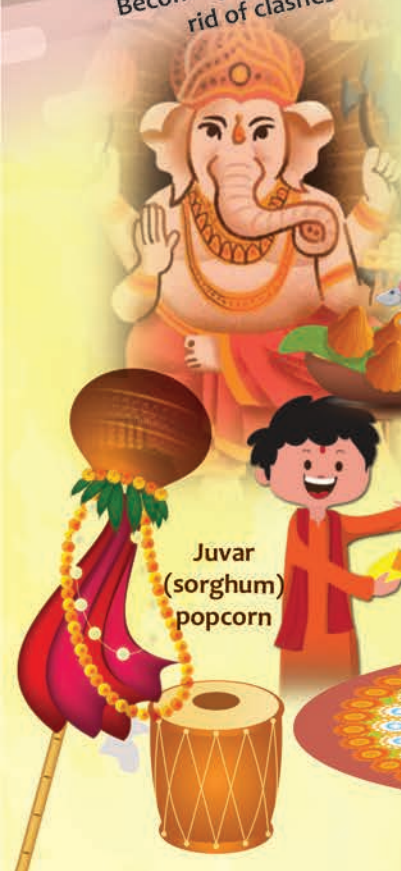
Search Activity



The things used in the festivals as well as the reasons behind the celebrations are mixed-up and hidden in the pictures. You have to pair the thing or the reason with the appropriate festival.



Festival	Thing/Reason
Holi	
Christmas	
Navratri	
Dhuleti	
Uttarayan	



Christmas tree

Worshipping Mataji

Rice and milk pudding

Worshipping
the sun



Eating together and forgetting
the bitterness



Festival

Thing/Reason

Raksha Bandhan

Janmashtami

Sharad Poonam

Diwali

Eid



Dandiya (small sticks
for dancing)



Tying
the rakhi



Lamps



Positivity




Mataki fod
(breaking
a clay pot)







December 25th, the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ, is celebrated all around the world as 'Christmas'. The festival is celebrated as a symbol of light, love and happiness.

 Giving gifts to people in need is of utmost importance in this festival. Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve conveys the message of living in peace with each other. On Christmas day people light candles in front of Lord Jesus and pray to him to light up their lives.

Santa Claus has a special significance at Christmas. Do you know how the tradition of Santa Claus began? Around 1700 years ago, there lived a saint called Nicholas. His parents died when he was young. From a young age Nicholas was a devotee of Lord Jesus. Saint Nicholas loved giving gifts to people in need and to children.

He would go out in the middle of the night to give out his gifts. He did this to keep his identity a secret. And thus from Saint Nicholas the legend of 'Santa Claus' was born. 

Christians decorate their homes during Christmas, with the main feature being a Christmas tree. It is said that when Jesus Christ was born, the angels sent their blessings to the parents. They adorned a fir tree with stars for them. Traditionally, every year since that day, a fir tree is decorated as a replica of that Christmas tree. The fir tree is decorated with a traditional star, colourful lights and bells. It is also decorated with garlands, flowers and other beautiful ornaments.

 It is said that there is no negativity in the homes that have this tree.





Uttarayan

Gnani Says...

The festival of Uttarayan was not originally for flying kites, it was for worshipping the sun. (Uttarayan falls immediately after the winter months). During this time the rays of the sun are beneficial for the eyes. So, this practice was set up. Then it got paired with fun and games.

Some people don't like just flying kites. They enjoy cutting other people's kites. There are various kinds of tactics and tricks involved when flying kites. Similarly, such tactics also exist in our daily lives. The one who is stronger crushes others and eventually gets crushed by the one who is even stronger. The one who wants to be free must understand that this is wrong and should let go of all these tactics!

Gnani Says...

At the time of Holi, the season changes and many trees shed their leaves. So, traditionally on that day the dry leaves were collected and a big fire was lit to burn them. If you kept burning the fallen leaves everyday then that would cause a daily disturbance. So, it was decided to burn all the leaves on one day in one go. This was the main reason for making the ceremonial bonfire.

The next day on Dhuleti, everyone has fun by playfully dusting each other with *gulal* (fragrant coloured powder used on occasions of joy). Playing heartily like this dissolves the attachments and animosity you may have had with those around you. Friends, let's rejoice, celebrate, let go of resentments and live happily with one another! Colouring everyone and 'playing Holi' dissolves feelings of vengeance. It makes you decide to live amongst each other with neighbourly love. This is the purpose behind playing Holi.

Holi

Gnani's Unique Ways...

Ever since childhood, Niruma did not like playing Holi at all. She didn't see the point of getting covered in colour when you just have to go wash it off after. She felt that all that extra washing was such a chore. That is why she never played Holi. Sometimes her sisters-in-law (her brothers' wives) would get hold of her and spray her with colour. But Niruma was also clever. After that, on the morning of Dhuleti, she would wear one of her sister-in-law's best saris. So, from then on, the sister-in-law couldn't bring herself to spray Niruma with colour!

Eid Mubarak

The holiest month in the Muslim calendar is the month of Ramadan. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims undertake Roza (fasting) and Ibadah (worship). The month of Ramadan comes to an end when the moon of Eid (new crescent moon) appears. The end of Ramadan is celebrated as Eid-ul-Fitr. The festival of Eid-ul-Fitr began about 1400 years ago.

The word 'Eid' comes originally from the word 'Abad' which means 'again'. The happiness that you get again every year is 'Eid'. 'Fitr' means 'charity'.

On the day of Eid, it is customary to do 'Sadak-e-Fitr', which is the custom of giving alms to the poor.

On the day of Eid, every Muslim household makes kheer (rice pudding). This dish, made with milk, sugar, rice vermicelli and dried fruits, conveys the message of filling life with sweetness again.

The Namaz (prayers) of Eid convey a message of equality. Big or small, rich or poor; all stand together in a line to offer prayers.

After the prayers, everyone embraces each other and exchanges greetings. They forget any bitterness that has arisen in their relationship over the past year. They clear their mind and reset their relationship with love and affection. Thus, Eid is also a day to forgive each other's mistakes and to repent.

Once someone asked the Prophet Hazrat Mohammed, "What should be done on the day of Eid?"

The Prophet replied, "On the day of Eid, express happiness with an open heart. Get rid of the bitterness of the mind. Eat, drink, and be merry. Enjoy the festivities while also remembering God."



Whenever Diwali came near, Niruma would start thinking about what special food to make for the mahatmas. She wanted everyone to really feel like Diwali is here. She'd order delicious sweet and savoury food to be made, and she'd take a special interest in the cooking process. All the ladies happily cooked what she ordered. Niruma would stand over and oversee while the ladies rolled out *mathiya* (thin spicy poppadoms).

Sweet Memories



Every Diwali, Niruma used to gift mahatmas with five or ten rupees. Many mahatmas have experienced that, after they placed Niruma's gift money in their safes, they have never had to face any financial difficulties.

During Uttarayan, Niruma would order *undhiyu* (mixed vegetable dish traditionally cooked in an earthen pot, sealed and placed upside down in a fire pit) and *jalebi* (sweet snack).

While staying with Niruma, mahatmas experienced how festivals should really be celebrated! Mahatmas would tirelessly make food for each other and joyously celebrate all the festivals together!



On the morning of Janmashtami, Niruma preferred the children from Gurukul (boy's hostel in Simandhar City) to perform the 'mataki fod'. Mahatmas and Pujyashree would also join them. Children would make all the preparations. i.e. covering the ground with a layer of soil, hanging a clay pot, full of buttercream, from a height. Children would form a human pyramid and a small child, dressed up like Krishna, would climb up to top of the pyramid and break the pot.

Once, a little boy dressed as Krishna, was finding it difficult to climb up the pyramid as his dhoti (loin cloth) kept getting caught under his feet. So, Niruma called him to her and she tied it up for him properly. Feeling rejoiced, he climbed up the pyramid and broke the pot. Niruma's affection touched the hearts of all the mahatmas as well as the children.

During Janmashtami, the sight of Niruma embracing the idol of Lord Krishna would make the mahatmas very happy and joyful. It would awaken the intent inside all the mahatmas' hearts to have the same love for Lord Krishna that Niruma had, and to become one with Lord Krishna through this true love.



Many ladies have experienced that, when they were staying with their families, during Navratri they would get dressed up in colourful outfits and go for garba. But, after coming to Niruma, they never felt the urge to go outside for garba. They asked Niruma if they could dress up and do garba in her presence. Niruma replied, "Yes, you can satisfy your moha (worldly attachments) as much as you want to, as long as you are with me." So, they would all wear a different outfit for each of the nine days of Navratri and do garba in front of Niruma.

During garba, everyone's focus would be on Niruma and they would feel worshipful towards her. No one would be thinking about themselves, I am looking beautiful, etc. In fact, doing garba in front of Niruma felt like the equivalent of doing garba in front of Mataji (the Mother Goddess).



With Niruma, Everyday's A Festival!



Mahatmas do not need an official festival in order to celebrate. For them, the company of the Gnani is in itself a festival and a celebration.

When the first rains of the monsoon came, Niruma would, without fail, go out and get soaked in the rain and ask the mahatmas to join her.

In the pouring rain, Niruma would feed the mahatmas fritters and sukhdhi (traditional Gujarati sweet) and soak everyone in her love!

FUN FACTS



WHY USE LEAVES FROM THE ASHOKA TREE (ASOPALAV) FOR MAKING GARLANDS DURING FESTIVALS?

Asopalav leaves, even after they are picked, continue to give oxygen for a long time. Whenever there is a special occasion where there are a lot of people, garlands made out of Asopalav leaves are hung so that the air gets purified and the atmosphere remains clean.



WHY EAT POPCORN DURING HOLI?

The festival of Holi comes straight after winter. In the cold season we eat things rich in ghee and sugar, which increases the amount of phlegm in the body. Eating Juvar (sorghum) popcorn is good for removing the phlegm.



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