



## A study on celebration of festivals in India for the inculcation of moral education

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### Abstract

In this article, an attempt has been made to highlight the culture of India as a land of diverse religious groups. Festival is a part of culture and therefore, originations and thoughts of various festivals are described in consecutive manner. Historical background and impulses of different festivals are also imitated in this article. Approaches of celebrations of diverse festivals such as Holi, Diwali, Karwa Chauth, Pongal Sankranti, Lohri, Eid al-Fitr, Christmas Day, Buddha Purnima or Buddha Jayanthi, Mahavir Jayanti, etc are described and messages of festivals celebrations are also consequently conveyed for mankind through this article.

**Keywords:** culture of India, various festivals, purposes of its celebrations

### Introduction

India is having the oldest culture in the world and its civilization is considered to be 4,500 years old. According to the All World Gayatri Pariwar (AWGP) organization, it is enlightened as 'Sa Prathama Sanskrati Vishvavara' which means the existence of first and the supreme culture in the world. 'Unity in diversity' is not only considered as words but also these are exceedingly applicable to highlight its incredible rich culture and heritage. From the Vedic era to the phases of Mauryas, Cholas, Mughals and British Rules, India has always been well-known for its cultural traditions and hospitality. The warmth in the relations and euphoria in celebrations endorse the distinctive position of the country in the global fraternity. The liveliness and generosity of the country attract millions of global travellers. They use to visit the country and enjoy its vibrant culture which is an amalgamation of traditional norms, religions, festivals, food, art, craft, dance, music and many other delicate things. The whole thing consisting of colourful and unique culture, its values, customs, rituals and traditions is phenomenon as extra ordinary and hence, country is highly appreciated as the 'Land of Gods'.

Greater India was designated as much more historical extent of Indian culture than the Indian subcontinent. People of those eras were given credit for their outputs in shaping much of Indian philosophy, literature, architecture, art and music. It was basically associated with the stretch of various religions, architecture, administration and writing system which were transformed from India to other parts of Asian countries. As instances, values, goals, practices, beliefs, hearty cooperation and brotherhood of Indian is stuffed in history of the country. Most of the Hindu families say 'Namaste' by placing both the palms together which is regarded as the most common way of respect to the outsiders as well as elders. Similarly, Muslims persons respect to the outsiders as well as elders by saying 'Adab'. It involves raising of right hand towards the face and the palms are inwards and is in front of the eyes with the finger tips which is almost touching the forehead. Hello or Hi

is not having any magic to occupy the space of 'Namaste' or 'Adab'. During the early stages of Indian civilization, such cultural activities were also transferred mainly by travellers and maritime traders using Silk Road.

This is substantial that nowadays, culture of India is also very renowned across the world. As very divertive and uniqueness, people specially refer to the culture of this country. But we rarely pursue towards the thoughts and ideology which corroboratingly support for the development of this affluent culture. Culture of this holy soil is rendered by its several unique customs and traditions which are surprisingly investigated by the outsiders. Origination of scriptures and texts of Ancient India is witnessed to have the great contribution to decide the way of life in India for thousands of years. Development of Taj Mahal acquaints the significant advances in architecture whereas invention of Zero notifies the momentous improvement of mathematics. Similarly, indigenous Ayurveda of India is very famed throughout the world for its beneficial impact. Presently, country is enlisted to achieve the glory of the second most populous nation in the world. This largest population group is found to settle down in different geographical regions of the country with having divergent languages, religions, food habits, dresses, arts of living, festivals and others which directly influence the culture of India.

It is a very vast country where every hundred kilometre is embraced by diverse backgrounds of the people, their beliefs, customs, heritage as well as a new cultural identity. History of India evidences that culture of this country has been profoundly influenced by Dharma or religion. India is considered as a spiritual and holy land. It is the sacred place of various religious groups such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Muslimism, Christianity, Jainism and Sikhism and they worship their primordial Gods and Goddess and enjoy the pleasures of fairs and festivals, as a part of the intrinsic cultural fabric. Activities such religious societies are also traditionally passed from old to new generations. Religions of this sacred land are also very famous to play the major role for

the formation of world religions along with Abrahamic ones. In spite of geographical diversities, India is renowned as the epitome land of culture and any one is enthusiastic to enjoy and to get experiences of these assortments.

The world, India is considered as one of the most religiously and ethnically diverse nation. Cultures and religious beliefs play a central role in the life of Indian people. From earlier stages of civilization, it is evidenced that most of these religious associations were connected with various types of festival which is considered as an old French word. The word 'Festival' was derived from the Latin word 'Festivus' that actually means festive. In the late fourteenth century, 'Festival' was used as an adjective. 'Festival dai' was declared as a religious holiday in Middle English. But first use of 'Festifall' was done as a noun in 1589. Approximately in 1200 and 1300, 'Feast' was first come into usage as a noun and then verb forms respectively. Probably, festival was originated from the word 'Feast' which was used as a synonym for any large or elaborated meal. Literally, the word 'festival' is an event ordinarily celebrated by a community cantering on some characteristic aspects of that community norms and its religion or traditions, often mark the local or national holiday, Mela or Eid'. In other words, 'a festival is a gathering of people to celebrate something, historically religious holidays (feast days)'. In Indian culture, festival is mostly understood as religious festivals rather than art or film festival. 'If all of the world's cultural heritage (sports, music, fashion, architecture, literature, painting, etc...) was contained in a time capsule, I would like to demonstrate the legacy in the form of Festivals'.

### Materials collection & presentation

Materials concerned to the festivals of India, impulses of festivals, historical background and its major developmental phases were accumulated from various sources such as grey literature survey, professional & academic publications, media, internet, etc. Under grey literature, reports, copyrights, working papers, documents, unpublished works and newsletters were consulted to collect the required materials. Professional and academic publications such as journals, conferences papers, dissertations, etc were investigated for the collection of festival related materials. Diffident newspapers and magazines were thoroughly read and radio and television programmes were followed in a regular manner to gather such important media materials. Regular searching of internet was very helpful to collect the concerned materials. Under this procedure, online publications, videos, user created contents, YouTube, Facebook, etc were tracked to accumulate materials. Lastly, all these collected materials were proceed, analysed and then represented in a consecutive manner.

### Discussions

Discussion part of this article consists of historical background, impulses of festivals and development phases of festivals which are stated as follows:

#### Historical background of festivals

Commencement of various festival celebrations is referred to the ancient tradition of this nation. The Vedic scriptures and literature make available many references regarding celebrations of festivals. Those people used to celebrate many

festivals just to give respect to the Gods, rivers, trees, mountains, forth coming of monsoons, the end of winter or the first glow of spring, etc. Their celebrations were performed not only fasting and prayers but also equally participating in socio-cultural events. There were evidenced to offer milk, butter and ghee on the 'Yajnas' or sacrificial fires by the worshippers. Freshly harvested crops were used to cook as the special foods for serving. Music, dance and drama were taken place as very important activities of their festivals. Wrestling matches and animal fights by rams, wild bulls, oxen, horses, rhinoceroses and even elephants were also acted upon as the enjoyable activities of the Vedic festivals. By assembling in such festivals, those people availed the opportunity to buy and sell their all variety of goods from handcrafted objects of ritual or daily use to live stocks.

In Valmiki Ramayan, it is found to mention that for a period of 14 years, Lord Rama was exiled along with his wife Sita and his younger brother Lakshman as a reason of his step mother Kaikeyi's insistence. During his period of exile, he fought against the demon Ravana of Lanka, put his end and achieved the victory. After 14 years of exile, Rama, his wife Sita and brother Lakshman returned to Ayodhya with great victory. At the entry point of Ayodhya, the admired people welcomed and celebrated them by introducing lighting rows of clay lamps. Another example in the context of Lord Krishna and the Mountain is found available in Mahabharat. The people of the village Gokula prayed to the God Indra to shower rains for harvesting their crops. But there was no any positive response in this regard from the God Indra. In that situation, Lord Krishna inspired those villagers to cultivate the fertile land around Govardhan Mountain and to worship this Mountain. By this activity, God Indra got irritated and deputed Thunder for torrential rain down on the village area. Lord Krishna lifted the whole mountain on finger and saved the villagers from such rain. This day is celebrated as Diwali for being thankful to God for the reward of nature.

It is presumed that the Indus Valley Civilization was existed between 3000 and 1500 B.C. During the existing period of the Indus Civilization, development of Harappa and the city of Mohenjo-Daro were very well-known. Those cities were renowned for its extraordinary planning and standard layout. Then Aryans slowly got entry and composed these evocative hymns to nature and started to celebrate their life exuberantly. They referred to them as Aryas meaning 'Noble'. Then the Magadh Kingdom was spread in 6th Century B.C. Chandragupta Maurya was regarded as the oppressive ruler of Magadh and his dynasty was existed from 322 to 298 B.C. After the ruling of that most famous Maurya King, Ashoka stretched his Great rule from 273 to 232 B.C extending his kingdom from Kashmir and Peshawar in the North and Northwest to Mysore in the South and Orissa in the East. As a result of blood shedding at the battle field of Kalinga (269 B.C.), he dedicated himself to adopt the path of Dharmma. Afterwards, the Guptas established their kingdom and ruled out up to the next 400 years of instability. The amazing wall paintings of the Ajanta caves and the writings of Kalidas are found to make many reflections of religious beliefs and celebrations of festivals.

People of our ancient India used to express all festive occasions through the words 'Samaja' meaning a gathering of

people, 'Utsava' or festival and 'Yatra' or pilgrimage or temple chariot procession. Today sometimes, we use the word 'Mela' meaning fair instead of 'Samaja'. But over the centuries, festival traditions have gradually been endured. Even today, festivals are symbolically acted to link between the homes, the villages and a larger outside world. Within the home or locality, celebrations of festivals are performed by the initiative of both men and women with love, respect and care. The freshly washed courtyards are decorated with flower petals, rice flour, etc and walls are painted with the bits of mirrored glass. Auspicious mango leaves or marigold flowers are used to design its doorways. In each festival, particular foods and sweets are carefully prepared during those particular festival days for offering to the deities and common people.

### **Impulses of festivals**

Many Indian festivals are originated from various religions which interlink social and religious significance and traditionally perform socio-religious activities. Therefore, celebrations of festivals are an imperative piece of the life of every Indian. The most important religious festivals are considered as Christmas, Rosh Hashanah, Diwali, Eid al-Fitr, etc which are celebrated for unity, reconciliation, brotherhood, etc. Holi, Dusshera, Krishna Janmashtmi, Hanuman Jayanti, Ganesh Chaturthi, Muharram, Shivratri and many others are traditionally celebrated specially in a country side and these are still predominantly associated with peace, courage, dedication of people and better harvesting of various crops. It is true that in South India, Pongal Sankranti is celebrated to make commemorative of the sacred ties with the land and inhabitants. Observance of Karwa Chauth is strictly done by Hindu married women for the long life of their husbands. It is most remarkable that Diwali, Holi and many such festivals are found very instrumental to renew the ties among older diasporic Indian communities and the people who presently in habit in India.

It may be mentioned here that festivals usually express the 'prima donna' which ensures the role of fostering national integration and admits the 'Great Indian Diversity'. As example, we can focus on the festival 'Diwali' which brings holy feeling of integration among different groups of the society. This social event is celebrated as 'Festival of Lights' across the world. Here, festival of light defines victory of good over the malevolence, present in many human beings. Mathura and Vrindavan are considered as the central points of Holi festival. The colours of the Holi festival are stretched all over the country by carrying a message of truth, love and brotherhood. By splashing Holi colours on each other, people come to a promise of being always truthful, maintain brotherhood for lifelong and pledge for giving all the possible love throughout the life. Feeding of sweets of this festival is also believed to make strong relationship among all.

Celebrations of Vasant Panchami, Ratha-yatra or Chariot moving, Sivaratri, Raksha Bandhan and numerous other Hindu festivals are accomplished all over India with having energy of cheerfulness and exhilaration. The Muslims celebrate several festivals like- Eid-E-Milad-Un-Nabi, Muharram, Eid-Ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Adha and others for massing peace, pleasure, brotherhood, etc. The sacred birthday of Lord

Jesus Christ, Easter, Good Friday and others are celebrated by the Christians. The Sikhs watch Guru Nanak's Birth Day. Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti, Lohri, etc. Buddha Purnima is celebrated by the Buddhists whereas, Mahavir Jayanti, Paryushan and others are celebrated by the Jains. All such festivals are connected with socio-cultural aspects. These festivals help us to constitute a common platform for exchanging cultural activities and give the happiness and introduce the path of devotion which is recounted as the important part of moral education. Lastly, we may quote a line of Rabindranath Tagore 'You are invited to the festival of this world and your life is blessed'.

### **Major phases of development**

History evidences that as an important part of culture, people of this country used to organise different festivals throughout the year. As a reason, it may be explained that festival was considered as the instrument to bring life to a state of enthusiasm. Therefore, all cultural activities of particular community were performed through the celebration of festival. But, today is the ploughing day and changes have been taken place to celebrate different types of festival. Day after tomorrow, procedures of festival celebrations may further be changed with respect to the changing of time and situation. Conversely, development phases of some major festivals with example are described in the following manner:

### **Holi Celebration**

Our mythology reflects that Hiranyakashyap, the king of demons circulated a notice to his subjects ordering respect and fear to him, not to another. But unfortunately, order was disobeyed by son, Prahlad of demon king. The young boy was a keen worshipper of Lord Vishnu. In spite of repeatedly warnings and threats of king, Prahlad did not roll back his decision. As a reason of violating order, king several times attempted to kill his own son but he could not success. Then by the order of king, Holika (sister of king) received Prahlad on her lap and sit on a burning fire. King knew that Holika had a boon and she must be protected from fire. Ultimately, Prahlad survived but Holika was burnt to death. The young boy was protected from harm whereas the evil activities of the demon king led to the death of Holika. Holi festival was started from the death of Holika. Presently, there is followed a tradition that bonfire is lit on the eve of Holi. People pray and offer and celebrate the triumph of good over evil.

In different phases of development of festivals, we further acquaint with the popular folklore of Lord Krishna and his birth place, Mathura. Our folklore evidences that Lord Krishna was in focus for playing pranks on the 'Gopis' and 'Radha'. It is also heard that Lord Krishna was dark complexion and as a reason, he always wondered for the fairness of Radha. In connection with this, wicked Krishna was suggested by his mother, Yashoda to smear his desired colour on the face of Radha for the change of her skin colour. Accordingly, Krishna smudged the colour and introduced the festival of colours, Holi.

Therefore, Holi is become a popular festival and everyone loves it. Presently, many communities are celebrating this festival according to their own customs and traditions. Holi is a popular festival, celebrated at spring season throughout the

country. Celebration of Holi festival is associated with a number of agricultural products, varieties of foods, mixture of cultures and several myths. This procedure of celebration influences the other cultures across the world. However, celebration of Holi festival is increasing its popularity and continuously messaging of truth, love and brotherhood.

### **Diwali Celebration**

Our legend, Ramayan of Valmiki reflects that Lord Rama of Ayodhya, his wife Sita and brother Laxman were exiled for a period of fourteen years. This is very well-known story, transpired dating back to 1500 B.C. During the period of exile, they faced many incidents. One of the famous incidents replicates that on the issue of Sita Ji, a battle was accomplished between Lord Rama and the demon-king Ravan of Lanka. Lastly, Lord Rama defeated and achieved victory over the demon-king Ravan. With glory, Lord Rama, Sita Ji and Laxman returned to Ayodhya after fourteen years. At entry, they were welcomed by the subjects of Ayodhya with the lighting of oil lamps. Celebration of Diwali was started with the light from remarkable returning event of Lord Rama, Sita Ji and Laxman.

Diwali in the Sikh religion is celebrated on the basis of different events. It is well-known that the sixth guru, Shri Hargobind Ji defeated Emperor Jahangir and extricated 52 Hindu kings who were imprisoned in the Fort of Gwalior. Victory of this war was celebrated by guru, Sikhs as Deepavali or 'Bandi Chhorh Divas' or 'the day of release of detainees'. Among Jain, celebration of Diwali results the 'Nirvana Kalyanaka of Lord Mahavir'. Gautam Swami, the chief Ganadhar expressed his true worship to Lord Mahavir. In the absence of Mahavir Swami, he observed mourn and thought that his soul was become free from all the bondages of Karmas. All Jains celebrate Diwali as the 'New Year of Your Life.'

### **Eid al-fitr celebration**

Eid al-Fitr is generally understood as 'feast of breaking the fast'. It is an important Muslim religious holiday, celebrated to mark the end of Ramadan which means the Islamic holy month of fasting. The Islamic or Hijri calendar is a lunar calendar which have a total 354 days in a year. Therefore, each of twelve lunar months includes 29 or 30 days at starting of appearing the crescent moon in the sky. As a result, the year loses 11 days with regard to the Gregorian solar calendar. Accordingly, the month of Ramadan shifts forward 11 days each year and side by side each year, Eid al-Fitr falls about 11 days earlier than the previous year. Some scholars believe that after a decisive victory at the battle of Jang-e-Badr, the first Eid al-Fitr was celebrated in the year 624 CE by the Prophet Mohammad and his followers. During the whole month of Ramadan, all Muslims strictly observe fast and participate in varieties of charitable and peace-making moral activities. It is believed as the time of intense spiritual renewal for those who observe it. A donation to the poor is given by each Muslim family during the last few days of Ramadan. By this donation mainly in the form of foods such as rice, barley, dates, etc, the needy people are enabled to participate in the celebration and share the pleasure. However, this holy festival is celebrated with family, community, friends and others. Eid

al-Fitr conveys the message of happiness and teaches to all for laughing and affection.

### **Christmas Celebration**

It is believed that Jesus Christ is the son of God. Therefore, celebration of Christmas Day or birth Day of Jesus Christ on December 25 is the important festival of Christian community. But there is controversy on the issue of birth day of Jesus Christ. On the basis of very little information, Christians celebrate birthday of Jesus on December 25. But many scholars are not agree with this date of birth day. Consequently, the orthodox Christians usually celebrate Christmas Day on or near January 7. This day is celebrated as the great excitement and funny Day. People visit the Church and offer prayers to Jesus Christ. The central issues of Christmas are concentrated on significant issues of doing prayer and wearing of fashionable clothes and also decorating of houses. Accordingly, people intentionally engage themselves to pray to their primordial God and wear smart colourful dresses. Then, they meet with all their family members, neighbours, relatives and friends. They also get together in a place, sing Christmas songs and share the common foods. They send messages to their friends, relatives and others to be happy and good luck for their present and future. Children are also very excited to receive the gifts from Santa Claus. Such gift distribution is purposive to improve their behaviour in a positive manner.

### **Lohri Celebrations**

As important festival, Lohri is celebrated by Sikh community. Before a week of Lohri, the younger collect firewood to burn well. At evening of cold winter's night of January, they gather forming a circle around the firewood and burn it. Lohri festival means a joyous time and it is celebrated by eating molasses and peanuts. In a circle form, they sing the songs and share the warmth of a bonfire with all and convey their respect and love to everyone. Celebration of Lohri is essentially dedicated to the Sun God. It is believed that Sun moves towards the Uttarayan and this configuration confers warmth to mother earth. The sowing seeds which are inactive are given heat for sprout forth. Therefore, it is respected as a harvest festival. Lohri celebration is restricted only for boys. Only Punjabis are permitted to celebrate Lohri. Even Hindus in general are restricted to celebrate this festival. It is phenomenon that there are many similarities between Holi and Lohri and there, some people believe that Holika (later on Holi) is related with Lohri as sister. But nowadays, celebration of Lohri is not limited in religious boundary. It reflects cultural activities also. Lohri celebration is not only for boys, it starts celebrate for girls as well at the eve of purchasing a new car or a house. Except Punjabi, the other community people also participate in this festival. They wish to each other for energy, enthusiasm, happiness, love and prosperity.

### **Buddha Purnima or Buddha Jayanthi**

This is a very auspicious day of birth, enlightenment (Nirvana) and death (Parinirvana) of Gautama Buddha, the Lord Buddha, celebrated on the full moon day in the month of April or May every year. Celebrations are continuously organised during three or more days. First of all, Lord Buddha



statue is worshipped by offering flowers, incense, candles and fruits. During these days, Buddhists organise various social, cultural and religious events and ceremonies like-prayer meetings related to Panchasheel, Sutrapath, Ashtasheel, Sutrasaban, lectures on the Gautam Buddha life history, religious speeches about the Buddhist scriptures, meditation, Bodhidroom Mela, etc. Many Buddhist organizations distribute holy books, magazines and other reading materials among people. They also help needy people by offering cash, foods and other necessary goods. Bodh Gaya Sarnath, Buddha Jayanti Park in Delhi and others are important Buddha religious places. Buddhists use to come from various countries of the world to celebrate the Buddha Purnima. At this day, large numbers of people participate in this special occasion. Celebration of Buddha Jayanthi messages to follow on the path of love, peace and truth.

### **Celebration of Mahavir Jayanti**

Mahavir Jayanti, the birth of the last Tirthankara is celebrated by Jainism as the name of 'Mahavir Janma Kalyanak' annually in the month of March or April. This celebration is organised at all the Jain temples all over the country with much fervour. At starting of the day, the Mahavir idol is brought for a ritual bath and then organise worship with having a big and grand procession. Jains decorate every holy places and temples of Mahavir with the flowers, flags, light, etc to celebrate this special occasion. Usually, Jain people come to the Jain temples for practising meditation and offering prayers. The virtues of Jain doctrine are inculcated to all by lectures, songs, folk tales, etc in the temple ground. Many of the Jain organizations are involved to do charitable activities. They are following their traditional norms and distribute clothes, money, foods, etc and provide health facilities to the needy people. Celebration of Mahavir Jayanti messages to choose the path of salvation by right behaviour, right knowledge and right belief, non-violence and truth, courage for walking on the correct path, happiness than having inner peace, calmness of mind, kindness towards others, etc.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

India is glorified for having oldest culture and civilization. From the Vedic era to the phases of Mauryas, Cholas, Mughals and British Rules, India has always been well-known for its cultural traditions and hospitality. 'Unity in diversity' is exceedingly highlighting its incredible rich culture and heritage. The country attract millions of global travellers to visit and enjoy its vibrant culture which is a combination of traditional norms, religions, festivals, foods, arts, crafts, dance, music and many other elusive things. India was so much for historical extent of Indian culture as compared to the Indian subcontinent. In those eras, credit was given to the people for their outputs in shaping much of Indian philosophy, literature, architecture, art and music. This country is the birth place of various religious groups such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Muslimism, Christianity, Jainism and Sikhism and they worship their religious Gods and Goddess and side by side, they celebrate festivals to enjoy the pleasures. Celebration of festivals helps them to live together with peace and harmony and inspire to be united in the diverse nature of

society such as multitude languages, different religions, castes and traditions.

Celebrations of festivals also carry the message of brotherhood, goodness, etiquette and morality. Therefore, people welcome festivals to act as mood elevators and to bring happiness and enthusiastic in their life. The pleasure of festivals equally touches the heart of all people without having any discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, creed, religion and geographical distribution. In one side, celebrations of festivals reflect cultural activities and in other side, renovate many internal matters by mutual considerations. Circumstances for social agreement are also built up through the celebrations of various festivals. Such types of social agreement inspire all the people to overlook their ill will. Even they discard their harsh insolence for respecting to the power of that thoughtful social agreement. However, celebrations of festivals mean to share the message of amusement, brotherhood, goodness, etiquette, dedication, reconciliation, untidiness in the diverse nature of society and encouragement for maintaining peace and harmony which help to inculcate them oral educational value.

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