

# Appropriate method and science in celebrating Holy festivals

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(An '\*' sign has been placed alongside important points)

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## Preface

1. The purpose of celebrating Holy festivals, Religious festivals and Vowed religious observances

A. General Information : Our Holy festivals and Religious festivals are such that they not only give us happiness while alive, but also help our subtle body gain momentum after death.

B. Realisation of the changes in the nature : For example, Nāriyal Pourṇimā is celebrated at the cessation of monsoons, when the sea becomes calm.

C. Increase in devotion through birthday celebrations of Incarnations : For example Shrīrām Navamī. The birthdays of Incarnations like Rām, Krushṇa etc. according to the Panchāṅg (Hindu Almanac), are celebrated because in their case the renunciation of body is not death. They can assume a body for the sake of their devotees anytime, meaning they are immortal.

D. Spiritual benefits through celebration of the death anniversary (according to the Panchāṅg) of Saints : For example the death anniversary of Shrī Dnyaneshwar. The death anniversary of Saints is celebrated, because most of the time they appear to be average persons or seekers by birth. Later, with spiritual practice they attain Sainthood. After renunciation of the body they go to higher loks (Regions) and that further augments their mission; energy expended thus far for the physical body is utilised for the mission. Hence, their death anniversaries are celebrated as a Holy remembrance. In case of ordinary mortals, the death anniversary is remembered because of the necessity of performing the ritual of shrāddha (Rite for departed ancestors) on that day.

E. Pourānic and historic events : An example is Vaṭapourṇimā. On this day, Savitri won a debate with Deity Yama and thereby successfully forced Him to bring her husband back to life.

F. Spiritual education : The sole objective of any form of spiritual practice is to bring about a non-duality amongst the seeker, his spiritual practice and his spiritual goal, meaning merging of the seeker with God. From this point of view, to inculcate a habit of seeing God even in the modes of spiritual practice, some Holy festivals are celebrated. For example:

F 1. Sheetlā Saptamī : Appliances such as the gas stove, frying pan, pincers etc. are not used on this day. Instead, their pūjā (Ritualistic worship) is performed.

F 2. Poḷā : On this day, farmers worship the oxen and ploughs.

F 3. Vijayādashamī : On this day each one worships his own tools. For instance, a tailor his scissors and tailoring instruments, a student and teacher their books etc.

F 4. Lakshmīpūjā : On this day businessmen worship the weighing scale and account books, while housewives worship the broom.

**2. Difference between Holy festivals, Religious festivals and Vowed religious observances :** This demarcation is not well defined as some Holy festivals are also celebrated as Religious festivals and Vowed religious observances. For example Shrīrām Navamī when celebrated individually is a Holy festival, when celebrated socially is a Religious festival and when celebrated individually with a specific sankalpa (Resolve), it becomes a Vowed observance.

**3. Do not view Holy and Religious festivals merely as traditions, understand the underlying science and deeper meaning :** Bharat has a number of Holy and Religious festivals and traditions. However, most people view and celebrate them merely as age-old practices; they do not pay attention to the underlying science and their deeper meaning. On Guḍhipādwā (Beginning of the Hindu New Year) leaves of neem are partaken as Prasād (Offering made to God and then distributed to devotees). Neem leaves have the ability to attract Prajāpati waves, which are maximum on that day. The science underlying partaking of neem leaves on that day is, 'As neem leaves have the ability to absorb the Prajāpati waves that are present in larger proportion in the atmosphere during that period, partaking of these leaves helps obtain added benefit of the Prajāpati waves.' If the underlying science of the Holy and Religious festivals is known, they can be celebrated with added faith; hence in this Holy text more emphasis is laid on deeper meaning and underlying science. Some times there is a difference in the ways of celebration of Holy and Religious festivals because of regional variations, social customs and ways of worship. The point to be noted here is that even when there is no scientific basis, celebrating festivals merely as an age-old tradition is incorrect. Such baseless traditions should be discontinued and only those practices as advocated by the scriptures should be continued. With respect to Vowed religious observances, they have the sankalpa of an evolved person, which by itself is the underlying scientific reason.

**4. Oppose practices harmful to Dharma and culture ! :** Such traditions have got important place in the society, for example crackers are lit during festivals like Diwālī and Gaṇēsh Chaturthī; people even indulge in immoral practices during festivals of Gaṇēsh Chaturthī and Navarātri. Such practices have gained importance in society these days. 'That such practices are the ways of celebrating festivals', is the harmful impression that the future generations will have about these festivals. Banning these practices and opposing them amounts to practising Dharma (Righteousness). These Holy texts expose the hollowness of such harmful, immoral practices.

**5. Importance of Holy festivals, Religious festivals and Vowed religious observances from the point of God-realisation**

A. As Holy festivals, Religious festivals and Vowed religious observances have a spiritually scientific base, celebrating those, results in generation of Chaitanya (Divine consciousness) and that helps even an ordinary man to march towards God.

B. From a seeker's viewpoint, Karmakāṇḍa may be an inferior form of spiritual practice, yet it is important to gradually divert those not doing any spiritual practice, towards Spirituality. From Karmakāṇḍa point of view the Holy festivals, Religious festivals and Vowed religious observances are so important that at least one or the other happens to be on 75% of the tithīs in a year.

C. We should always exercise restraint in our life; but in practice it is difficult. Hence, at least during Holy festivals, Religious festivals and Vowed religious observances it should be exercised, so that gradually we become accustomed to a life of restraint. We pray at the Holy feet of Shrī Guru that may Holy festivals, Religious festivals be celebrated faithfully by understanding the underlying science, leading to spiritual evolution of those who do so. -  
**Compiler**