

Holy Festivals, Religious Festivals and Vowed Religious Observances - Part 1

Preface

1. The purpose of celebrating Holy festivals,

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, *Nariyal Pournima* is celebrated at the cessation of monsoons, when the sea becomes calm.

C. Increase in devotion through birthday celebrations of Incarnations: For example Sri Ram Navami. The birthdays of Incarnations like Ram, Krishna etc. according to the *panchang* (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 *panchang*) of Saints: For example the death anniversary of Sri 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 *shraddh* (rite for departed ancestors) on that day.

E. Getting motivated to do spiritual practice through *Puranic* and historic events: An example is *Vatpournima*. On this day Savitri won a debate with Lord 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 the Lord. 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. *Sheetla Saptami*: Appliances such as the gas stove, frying pan, pincers etc. are not used on this day. Instead, their *puja* (ritualistic worship) is performed.

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

F 3. *Vijayadashami*: 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. *Lakshmi-puja*: On this day businessmen worship the weighing scale and account books, while housewives worship the broom.

2. Difference between Holy festivals,

This demarcation is not well defined as some Holy festivals are also celebrated as Religious festivals and Vowed religious observances. For example Sri Ram Navami when celebrated individually is a Holy festival, when celebrated socially is a Religious festival and when celebrated individually with a specific *sankalp* (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 *Gudipadwa* (beginning of the Hindu New Year) leaves of neem are partaken as *prasad* (offering made to God and then distributed to devotees). Neem leaves have the ability to attract *Prajapati* frequencies, 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 *Prajapati* frequencies that are present in larger proportion in the atmosphere during that period, partaking of these leaves helps obtain added benefit of the *Prajapati* frequencies.' 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 *sankalp* of an evolved person, which by itself is the underlying scientific reason.

4. Oppose practices detrimental to Dharma and culture!

Crackers are lit during festivals like *Diwali* and *Ganesh Chaturthi*; people even indulge in immoral practices during festivals of *Ganesh Chaturthi* and *Navratri*. 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). This Holy text exposes 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, *karmakand* may be an inferior form of spiritual practice, yet it is important to gradually divert those not doing any spiritual practice, towards Spirituality. From *karmakand* 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 *tithis* 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 Sri 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

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