

MEET THE CITY

A GOD

FOR EVERY SEASON

FESTIVE SPECIAL

Volume - II / October 2015

A Photo Journal by Meet the City, for the Festive Season.
Celebrate India's religious and festive diversity through her innumerable Gods and Deities.

Cover image shot at Mahakumbh, 2015, Trimbakeshwar, Nashik.
Photo credit © Amit Kane



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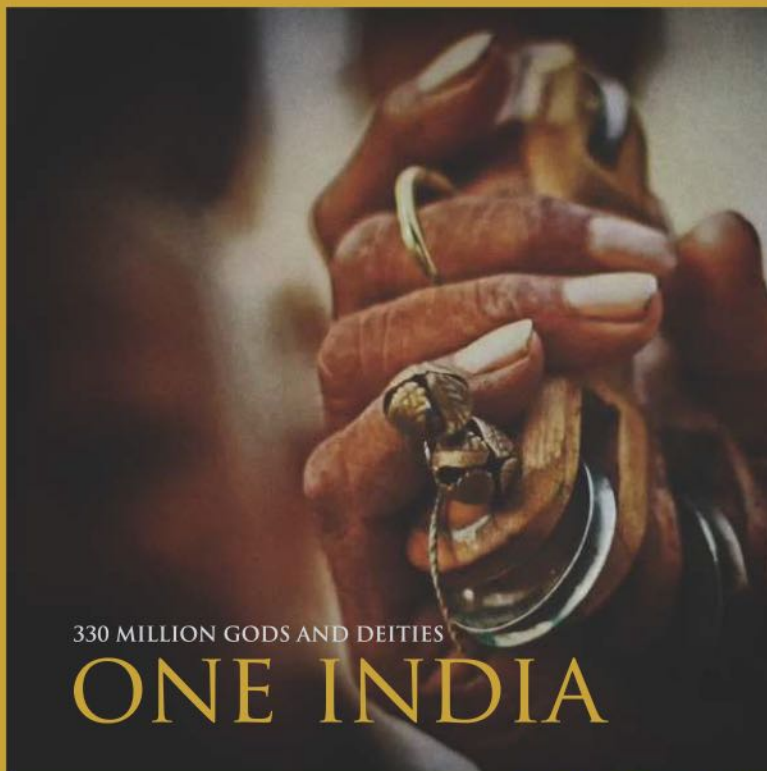
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An architectural rendering of two modern skyscrapers, Trump Towers Pune, set against a dramatic twilight sky with soft clouds. The buildings feature a glass and steel facade, with many windows illuminated from within, creating a warm glow. The taller building on the left has a more complex, stepped profile, while the shorter one on the right is more rectangular. In the foreground, there is a landscaped area with greenery and a low wall. The background shows a city skyline with other buildings under the evening sky.

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330 MILLION GODS AND DEITIES

ONE INDIA

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FOREWORD

The beautiful and intensely colourful festivals of India are a glorious testimony to our vibrant and diverse culture.

Not only visually stunning and a photographer's delight, these festivals are full of meaning and symbolism. They celebrate the many deities' birthdays, seasonal changes, interpersonal relationships, and much more.

They are a time of celebration, bringing families and people of the community closer. October is the beginning of the festive season, here in India.

We'd like to pay a photographic tribute to the numerous magnificent festivals of India.

This festive season, we wish our dear readers luck and prosperity, and most importantly, a whole lot of fun!

Happy Festivities.

ATUL CHORDIA

Chief Editor

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Associate Editor

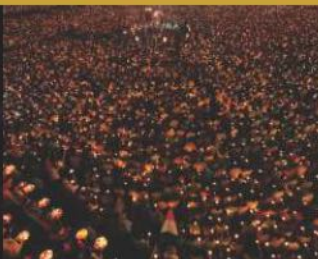
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Aatukul Pongala
Baisakhi
Bandi Chhorh
Bohag Bihu
Bonalu
Chham
Chhath
Christmas
Diwali
Dussehra
Eid-al-Fitr
Ganesh Chaturthi
Guru Purnima
Hemis
Holi

FESTIVALS OF INDIA

Holla Mohalla
Janmashtami
Karva Chauth
Lamayuru
Lohri
Makar Sankranti
Manja Neerattu
Maotsu
Mehraj-u-Alam
Navroz
Onam
Pandharpur Wari
Pooram
Pushkar Lake Ceremony
Ramnavmi
Shivratri
Theyyam

Meet India Through Her Many Festivals.

"India is a country in which every great religion finds a home."

- Dr. Annie Besant (1847-1933), British socialist, theosophist, women's rights activist, writer and orator and supporter of Indian self-rule



In this wonderful festive issue of Meet the City, we invite you to travel with us across the length and breadth of India and partake in the festivities; get drenched in the vibrant colours of Holi and Krishna Janmashtami at Vrindavan and the martial festivities of the Holla Mohalla and Bandi Chhorh in Punjab.

This season we are celebrating the diversity that is India, from Leh-Ladakh to Trivandrum, as we bring to you enigmatic celebrations such as the Hemis festival, Karva Chauth, Chhath Puja, Ganesh Chaturthi, Onam and Theyyam. The Hornbill festival of Nagaland and the Rasa Lila of Manipur are a pertinent reminder to us about just how beautiful the North-Eastern regions of India are. The sifting sands of Rajasthan play host to the Pushkar Fair that also sees hordes of devotees participate in the lake ceremony in this sleepy town of Ajmer district - Rajasthan has never looked as stunning!

India celebrates innumerable Gods and deities; a figure pegged at almost 330 million. We have a God for every reason, and for every season. And it has been our attempt to showcase to you the most diverse facets of all celebrations, across the country. We have taken every care to feature the most cherished deities along with the ones not so famous too. But, to cover 330 million deities is naturally unfathomable, and hence we have paid a photographic tribute to the most magnificent deities and festivals of India.

In the words of Daniel Webster,

"May the sun in his course visit no land more free, more happy, more lovely, than this our own country."



Musicians at Dussehra Festival celebrating the triumph of Lord Rama over the demon king Ravana, Kulu Valley, Shimla.
Photo © Getty Images



DUSSEHRA

Dussehra is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Dasha Hara', which means destroyer of evil or 'cutting off the 10 heads of Ravana'.

In Hinduism, Goddess Durga is the embodiment of *shakti*, the feminine force that governs all cosmic creation, existence, and change. In the North of India, Ramlila is the highlight of Dussehra, a play which commemorates Rama's victory over the demon Ravana as described in the Ramayana.

In the South and especially in the eastern state of West Bengal, it is the triumph of Durga over the demon Mahishasura that is celebrated.

Celebrated fervently across West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, and Odisha, Durga Puja or *Durgotsav* involves the worship of Goddess Durga and marks her victory over the evil buffalo demon *Mahishasura*, epitomising the victory of good over evil.

Durga Puja is celebrated across 6 days of *Navratri*, beginning on the sixth day *Shashthi* and culminating on the tenth day of *Dussehra* or *Vijayadashami*.



Goddess Durga is honoured with great pomp and fervour during the annual Navratri festival, which marks the beginning of autumn in India and occurs typically in the months of September or October. The Sanskrit word Navratri translates to "nine nights" and on each day of the festival, nine different forms of the goddess are worshipped. In West Bengal, this festival occurs on days six through ten of Navratri. On the tenth day, Durga's victory over evil is celebrated as Vijayadashami. Durga Puja or Durgotsava is the largest festival of the year for Bengali Hindus. In large open spaces in West Bengal, elaborate *pandals* (temporary temples) made of bamboo and decorative cloth are created to house life-sized idols of Durga in clay that depict her slaying Mahishasura. The idols are worshipped for five days and carried in wonderful procession to a local river for immersion, symbolising Durga's reunion with Shiva.

Durga Puja in Kolkatta, West Bengal . Photo © Kalpana Chatterjee



Sindoor Khela

Photo © Kalpana Chatterjee

The *sindoor* or vermillion is a sign of matrimony amongst Hindu women. And for married Bengali women this assumes much importance on the last day of Durga Puja when they apply *sindoor* to the Goddess's feet or forehead and then smear one another with the same, wishing each other a happy married life. Revelry plays a key role in this ritual. *Sindoor Khela* is a celebration of matrimony since the *sindoor* gives women a certain social importance.

DUSSEHRA





Navratri Maha Arti in Surat, Gujarat

Photo © Imagelibrary/Corbis

Hindu devotees hold earthen lamps to perform prayers called "Arti" during the celebrations to mark the Navratri festival in Surat in the western Indian state of Gujarat. Devotees worship various forms of Hindu goddesses during the festival, whose name literally means nine nights.

Devotion

Photo © Chinmoy Mukerji / INCK fotofolio



Fervour for the mother!

Photo © Chinmoy Mukerji / INCK fotofolio

The *dhunuchi nritya* is a frenzied dance common in eastern India, especially West Bengal for Durga puja. The *dhunuchi* is a type of incense burner, flared in shape and held by the stem with a large cavity on the top which is lit by placing a piece of burning coal, coconut husk and incense. The *arti* at Durga puja is accompanied by the passionate clanging of cymbals and beating of drums, while the *dhunuchi* bearer is engulfed in a sea of devotion, feverishly dancing like a dervish.



Durga Visarjan / Dhunochi Naach

Photo © Chinmoy Mukerji / INCK fotofolio

DUSSEHRA



Dussehra festival with Ramlila and Ravana in Mumbai.
Photo © Alamy

Demon King Ravana : An artist prepares backstage to play the role of Demon King Ravana, during the Ramlila, on the occasion of Dussehra.

Photo © Imagelibrary / EPA



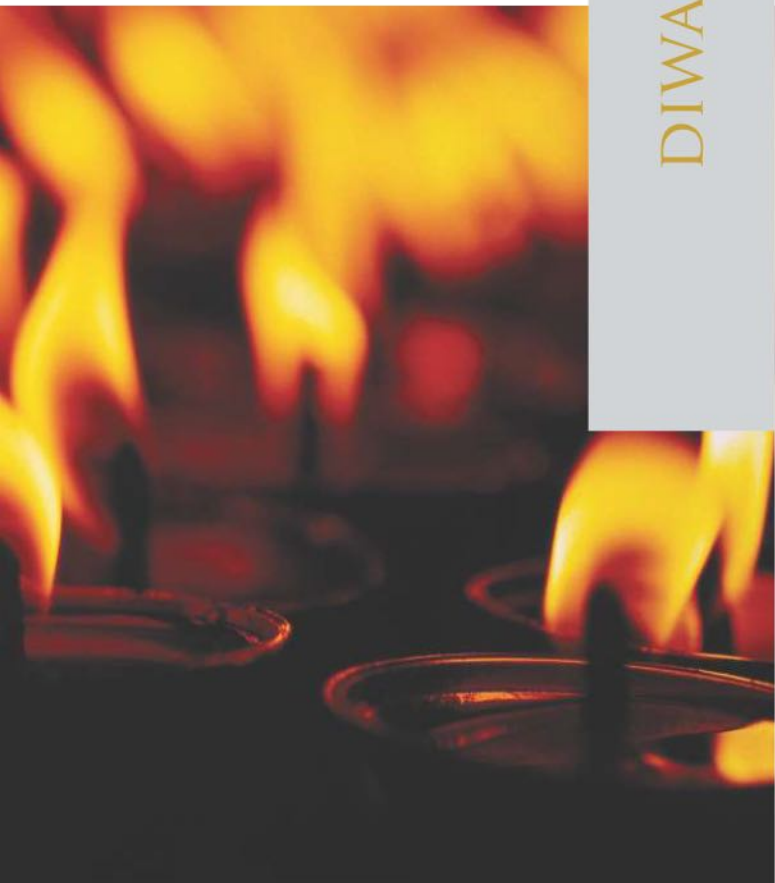
Performers of a Ramlila troupe

Photo © Kalpana Chatterjee

Artists preparing for Ramlila, a theatrical folk re-enactment of the life of Lord Ram, ending in the ten-day battle between Ram and Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, as described in the Ramayana. The performances are timed to culminate on the occasion of Vijayadashami or Dussehra, marking the victory of good over evil.



Photo © Alamy



DIWALI

Diwali, or Deepavali, is the beautiful, iridescent festival of lights. It celebrates the victory of light over darkness.

It typically lasts for five days with the main festival night being on the darkest, new moon night of the Hindu lunisolar month *Kartika*.

The rituals surrounding this festival include cleaning, and renovating of homes before Diwali night, wearing new clothes on Diwali night, lighting of diyas (earthen lamps) inside and outside of homes, and *Lakshmi puja* - veneration of the Goddess of wealth and prosperity.

DIWALI



Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis

**Indian craftsmen make earthen lamps
ahead of Diwali**

Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis



**Tribal women in Gujarat paint the walls of their homes,
in preparation for Diwali .**

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters





**Victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance,
good over evil, and hope over despair.**

Photo © Getty Images

The widows of Vrindavan wave sparklers as they participate in celebration for Diwali on the banks of the Yamuna river.

The Vrindavan widows have defied certain age-old regressive Indian traditions by celebrating not only Diwali, but also Holi and Raksha Bandhan.

In a breakthrough moment for Indian society, they lit the earthen lamps which was a symbolic act - one of warding off decades of darkness that caved in their lives after they lost their husbands.





Creating God - An artist giving final touches to the statue of Goddess Kali in West Bengal
Photo © Avishek Mazumder

Dedicated to goddess Kali, *Kali Puja* is celebrated on the new moon day of the Hindu month *Karthik*. Celebrated especially across West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, and Assam, Kali Puja coincides with the pan-Indian Laxmi Puja day of Diwali.

Kali is worshipped at night with *tantric* rites and *mantras*, and is offered red hibiscus flowers, animal sacrifice, sweets, rice, lentils, fish, and meat.

Kali Puja in Kolkata during Diwali

Photo © Amit Rane

DIWALI



Traditional Diwali lamps and candles lit on the occasion of Diwali.
Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis



Hindu God Ganesh at Diwali Festival.
Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis



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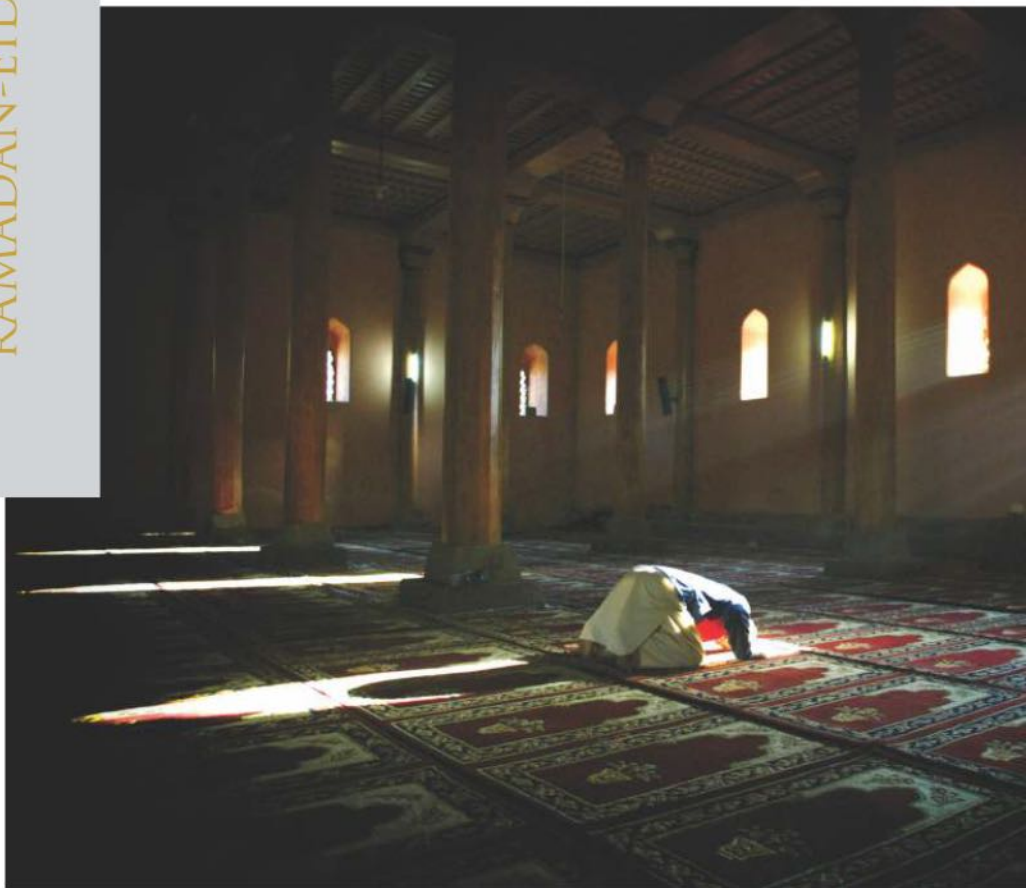


RAMADAN-EID-AL-FITR

Millions of Muslims in India (and across the world) celebrate their biggest religious festival Eid-al-Fitr, which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

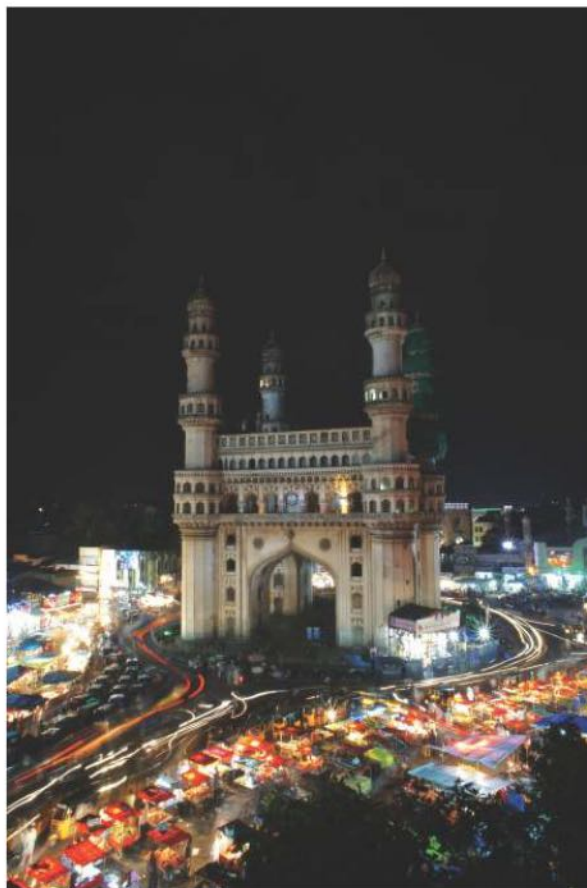
Eid-al-Fitr celebrates the conclusion of the 29 or 30 days of fasting during the entire month of Ramadan, when people refrain from eating, drinking, and smoking from dawn to dusk. People break their fast in the evening with light a meal known as *Iftar*. *Iftar* parties in modern times are social events, involving family and friends and are gaining immense popularity especially amongst the urban milieu.

In India, the night before Eid is called *Chaand Raat* (Night of the Moon), and people visit bazaars and malls for Eid shopping. Women and girls adorn their hands with *henna* and don colourful bangles.



A Kashmiri Muslim prays inside the Jama Mosque in Srinagar, in India. Ramadan, the holiest month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is when devout Muslims refrain from all food, drink or sex during daylight hours and focus on devotion and good works. The Muslim festival of Eid-al-Fitr is then celebrated at the end of Ramadan.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis



The first fortnight of Ramadan at Charminar, Hyderabad
Photo © Rajesh Pamnani



Indian Muslims pray at the ruins of Feroze Shah Kotla during the Eid-Al-Fitr festival in New Delhi.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis

EID & RAMADAN

Iftar at Russell Market, Bangalore

Photo © Abhinay Omkar



A young boy looks on while others attend the Eid-al-Fitr morning prayers at Masjid-E-Khadriya in Bangalore, India

Photo © Imagelibrary / EPA

MEHRAJ-U-ALAM

Mehraj-u-Alam marks the ascension day of Prophet Mohammed. On this day, hundreds of devotees throng the Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar. The shrine houses a relic believed to contain a hair from the beard of the prophet.





A Kashmiri Muslim woman prays at the Hazratbal Shrine on the outskirts of Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India.

Photo © Imagelibrary / EPA

Ganesh Chaturthi

Ganesh Chaturthi is celebrated across India in the Hindu calendar month of *Bhaadrapada*, that falls between August and September each year. Although Lord Ganesh, the elephant headed deity is revered across the country, the most iconic of all Ganesh festivities are the ones in Mumbai with towering, larger than life idols, and devotees thronging the public pandals to offer their prayers.

The 10 days of pomp and gaiety end with the Ganesh Visarjan or Anant Chaturdashi, the immersion of the idols into the Sea. Quintessentially Mumbai, this is a day of long processions filled with pomp and splendour, and the Ganesh idols are taken to the Arabian Sea and immersed in the waters amidst the din of cymbals and drums. Crowded, noisy, and yet so full of life, the Mumbai Ganesh Visarjan is where chaos is the order of the day!



Electrifying experience at Girgaum Chowpatty during the Hindu festival of Ganesh Visarjan at Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Photo © Getty Images

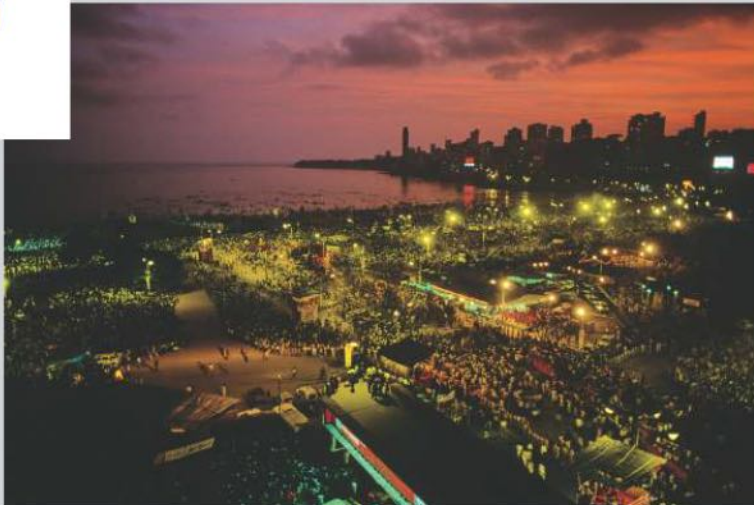
GANESH CHATURTHI

The Shreemant Dagdusheth Halwai Ganpati

The Shreemant Dagdusheth Halwai Ganpati was inception by Shri Dagdusheth Halwai and his wife Lakshmbai in Pune, when they lost their young son to the plague. One of the most revered and endearing deities of Pune, Shreemant Dagdusheth Halwai Ganpati is regarded as the pride of the city, with faithful devotees from across the country thronging the city to seek blessings.

The temple trust is also an integral part of the Ganesh festivities as is the deity itself, because of the numerous social and cultural welfare activities it undertakes. During the 10 days of festivities of Ganesh Chaturthi, the idol of the deity is brought out from the temple and placed in a beautifully decorated structure, each year replicating famous monuments of India, created specially by skilled artisans from across the country.

Photo ©Rupesh Jadhav



Girgaum Chowpatty during Ganesh Visarjan at Mumbai.

Photo © Imagelibrary/Corbis



Puneri dhol pathak

Pune prides itself for the rich heritage of the *sarvajanik ganpati*, almost always accompanied by the *dhol-taasha pathak*. The city boasts of numerous groups and organisations that specialise in the art of playing the *dhol* and *taasha*, with regular and disciplined practice sessions for the season beginning at least a month before the festival commences.

Photos © Rupesh Jadhav



Palkhi Procession

Photo © Soumasreekar Photography



PANDHARPUR WARI



The Pandharpur Wari is a distinct form of pilgrimage, deeply steeped in the spiritual tradition of collective *Bhakti* (worship).

The pilgrims or *warkaris* endure nature, and walk through rain and shine, ravines and plateaus, from Alandi to Pandharpur and Dehu to Pandharpur, accompanying the *palkhis* (palanquins) of Maharashtra's poet-saints Sant Jnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram to the Vithoba temple at Pandharpur.

The two saints were said to be ardent devotees of the Lord, and as the *palkhis* proceed on their journey, the air is filled with devotees singing *bhajans* in praise of the Lord, to the beat of *dholkis* (drums).



Palkhi walk with God's music

Photo © Chinmoy Mukerji / INCK Fotofolio



Mauli Mauli

Steeped deeply in the *bhakti* tradition of worship, the Pandharpur wari is witness to fervent devotees singing *abhangas* (devotional songs) all through their journey. The air resounds to the refrain of *Jai Jai Ram Krishna Hari* chanted by the warkaris.

All Photos on this page © Rupesh Jadhav

As the *Palkhis* of Sant Jnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram make their way through Pune city, the devotees break journey at various places of worship all the while not ceasing to sing praises of the lord.

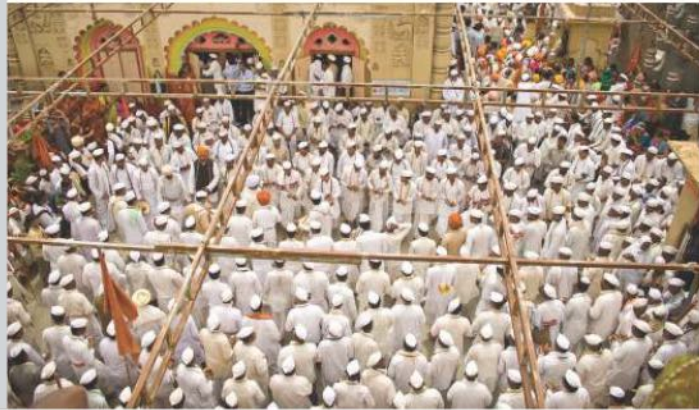
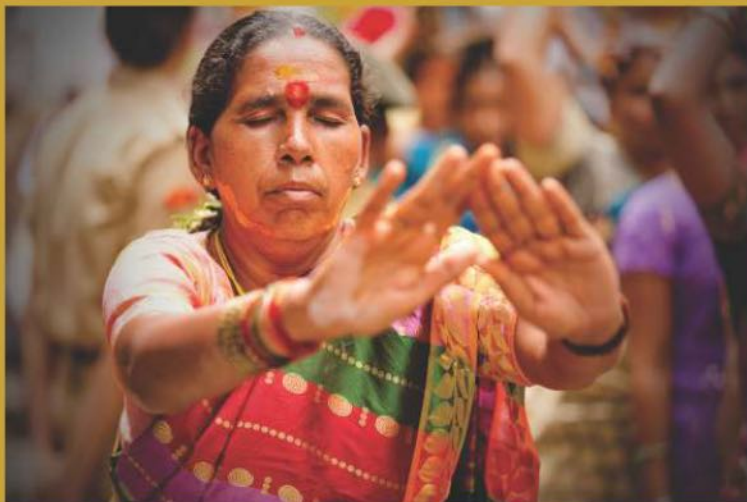




Photo © Rajesh Pamnani

BONALU

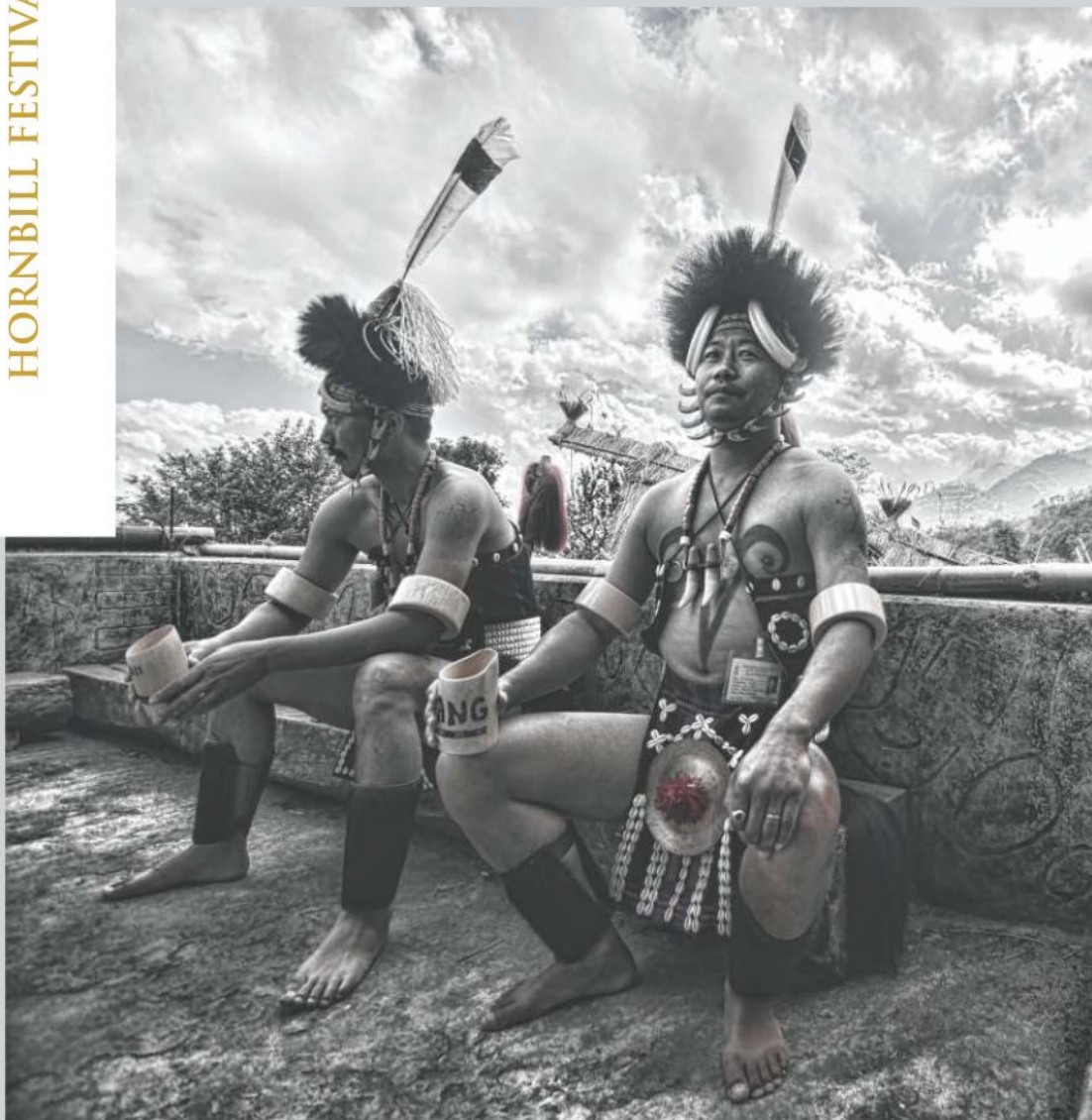
The word Bonalu originates from *Bonam* which means *Bhojanam* or Meal in Telugu, and is an offering to Goddess Mahakali. Across Telangana, people perform *pujas* for the goddess as a thanksgiving for the fulfillment of vows. The festival takes place in *Ashada Masam*, in Jul-August each year. Bonalu dates back to 1813 to the Hyderabad and Secunderabad regimental bazaar, which was witness to a breakout of the plague, claiming thousands of lives. A military battalion that was deployed at Ujjain at the time was concerned for the safety of their family and friends back home and offered prayers to Goddess Mahakali vowing to install her idol in Secunderabad. It is believed that their prayers were answered and the spread of the disease was halted. Upon their return, the military battalion installed the goddess's idol by offering her Bonalu.



This woman appeared enchanted and in a trance while praying to the Goddess, facing the temple, while other worshipping women walked past her. It seemed as if she had successfully established a WiFi connection with the Goddess and was in a deep communication with the almighty.

Photo © Shashank Mhasawade

HORNBILL FESTIVAL



Naga Tribesmen dressed in traditional attire for Hornbill Festival

Photo © Amit Rane



Tribal tribute

Hornbill festival, Kohima, Nagaland

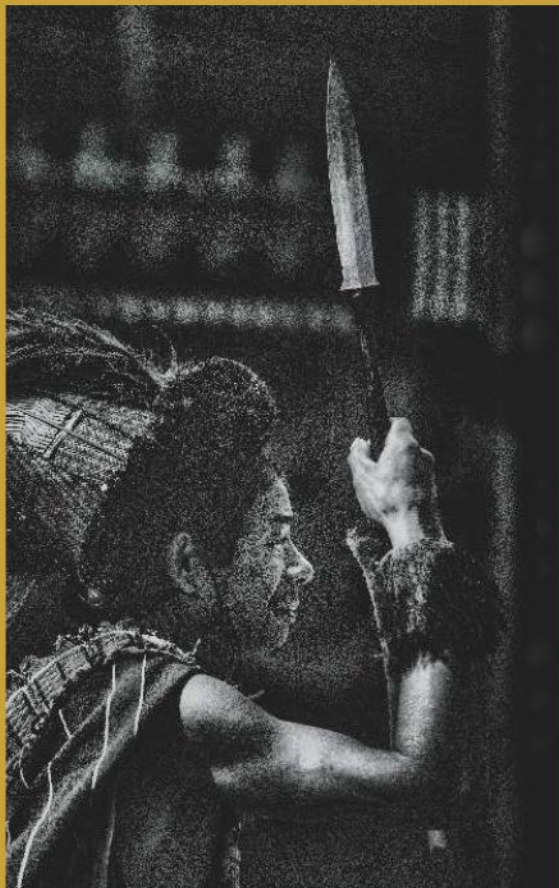
Photo © Amit Rane

Hornbill Festival is considered one of the biggest events in Nagaland and showcases the rich tradition and cultural heritage of the Naga people.

The week-long festival features vibrant dance performances, traditional art and craft stalls, food fairs, herbal medicine stalls, flower shows and sales, fashion shows, traditional archery, Naga wrestling, games, and it all comes to an end with a joyous musical concert.

The festival derives its name from the hornbill, a bird most admired by the Naga people for its quality of alertness and its majestic appearance.

The bird is entrenched in the social and cultural fabric of the people, as is evident in their folklore.



In the land of head-hunters

A Konyak tribesman at Hornbill Festival, Kohima, Nagaland

Photo © Amit Rane



Headhunter

A Konyak tribesman performs the head-hunting act at the arena. Guns , arrows and spears at Hornbill Festival, Kohima, Nagaland

Photo © Amit Rane



Ao Nagas celebrate the seed sowing festival of Moatsu

Moatsu is a three-day festival celebrated by the Ao Nagas after the completion of seed sowing period.

The Moatsu festival provides the Ao Naga a period of recreation and entertainment after the stressful work of clearing fields, burning jungles and sowing seeds and it's marked by peppy songs and dances.

Photo © Samrat Sengupta

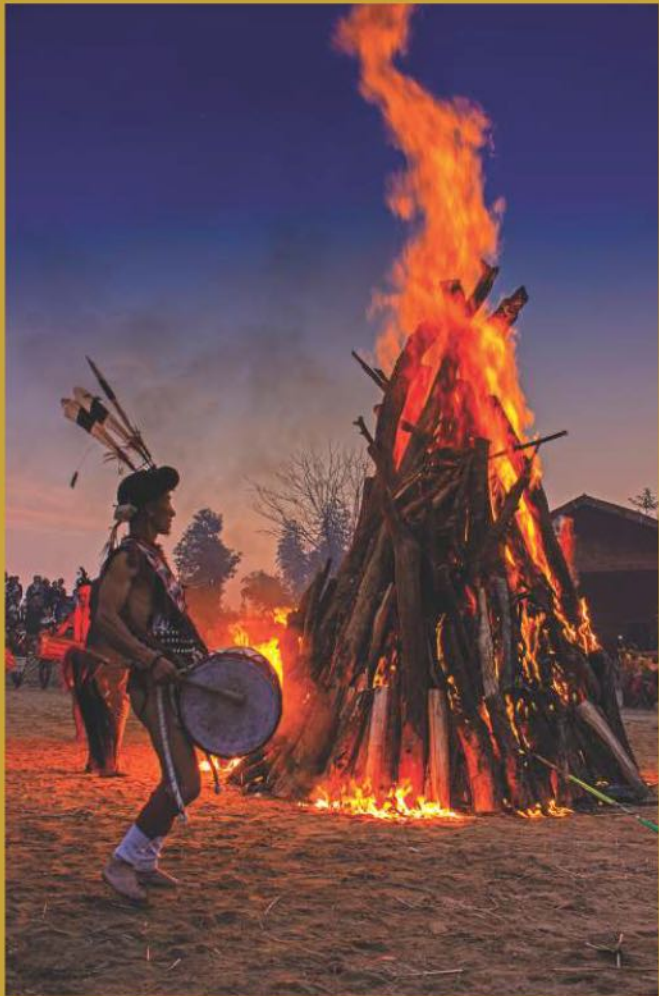


Photo © Samrat Sengupta

HEMIS TSECHU



Photo © Kalpana Chatterjee



The milky way over Leh city.
Photo © Amit Rane

The Hemis Monastery, founded by the Namgyal dynasty in 1630 AD is one of the largest and most significant of Tibetan Buddhist *Gompas*.

On the 10th day (Tse Chu) of the Tibetan Lunar month (June-July)

the Hemis monastery celebrates the birth anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava (Guru Rimpoche), over two days of festivities.

The festivities are ushered in with an early morning ritual atop the *Gompa*, where the Guru's portrait is ceremoniously put up on display to the sounds of beating drums, clashing cymbals and the spiritual wail of trumpets and pipes.

The highlight of the festival is the mask dance that is performed by the Lamas garbed in extravagant costumes and brightly painted masks and gathered around the central flag pole, to celebrate the victory of good over evil.



Photo © Kalpana Chatterjee

Photo © Andrea Cavallini



Singhi Chham or *Kanchendzonga* Dance is a dance form in Sikkim that is usually performed during the Panglapsool festival. Said to have been introduced by Chador Namgyal, the third Chogyal of Sikkim, in the 18th century, this is a dance of the Bhutia people.

The dancers wear a lion costume to represent a snow lion, 2 dancers per lion, accompanied by a drummer. The dance is of great religious significance to the Bhutia people because it is associated with the sacred Kangchenjunga (Khang-Chen Dzong Pa) range that is said to resemble the legendary snow lion.



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THIKSEY GUSTOR



Photo © Kalpana Chatterjee



Warding off evil

The Gustor festivities take place at the Thiksey, Spituk, and Karsha monasteries in Leh-Ladakh, marking the victory of good over evil.

Gustor literally means 'sacrifice of the 9th day' and it commemorates the birth of Tsongkha-pa, the founder of the Geluks-pa monastic order in Tibet.

It is a celebration of good over evil and is held simultaneously across monasteries over two days. Masked dancers masquerade as guardians, protectors, and Gods and Goddesses.

The festival culminates with dismemberment of the *Torma*, or the sacrificial cake in a ceremony called *Argham* or killing that symbolises the destruction of all forms of evil.

Children make music
Photo © Imagelibrary/Reuters

Bohag Bihu is one of the major festivals of Assam, also referred to as Rongali Bihu, and is celebrated during the month of April.

It celebrates the onset of the Assamese New Year and the coming of Spring.



BOHAG BIHU



A troupe performs the Bihu Dance at the Botrding field premises during the Rongali Bihu celebrations in Sivasagar.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters



An Indian youth plays a 'Dhol' - traditional Assamese drum during Rongali Bihu celebrations in Sivasagar district of northeastern Assam state on April 30, 2015.

In Assam, the *dhol* is widely used in Rongali Bihu (Bohag Bihu), the most beloved festival of the Assamese people. Rongali Bihu is celebrated in the first month every year according to Assamese traditional calendar. Assamese people consider *dhol* to be a *devo badyo* or instrument of God, and that it was brought to earth by the Pandavas.

GURU PURNIMA





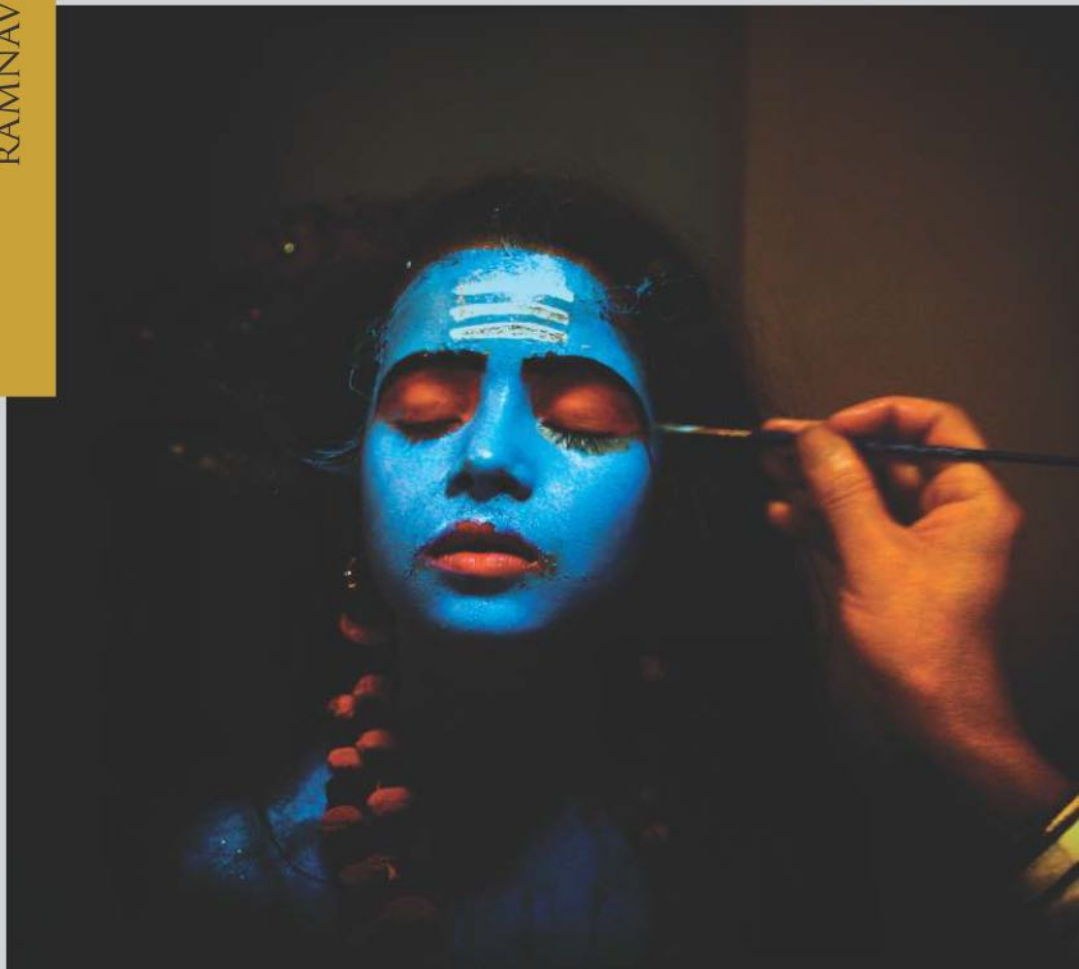
Guru Purnima is traditionally celebrated by Hindus and Buddhists during the full moon day in the Hindu month of *Ashad* (July-August).

This festival is dedicated to spiritual and academic teachers and is the time when seekers or disciples offer gratitude to their 'gurus', and seek their blessings.

A Buddhist monk during a special prayer meeting on the occasion of 'Guru Purnima'.
Photo © Imagelibrary / EPA

RAMNAVMI

Hindu devotees celebrate the festival of Ramnavmi, the birth anniversary of Lord Rama across India, which also marks the end of the nine-day long fasting and Chaitra-Navaratri festival in north India.



An artist applies make-up on an Indian child dressed as the Hindu God Shiva just before taking part in a religious procession on the occasion of Ramnavmi.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters



Indian devotee dressed as the Hindu deity Hanuman before taking part in a procession to mark the Ramnavmi Festival.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters

A child dressed as Hindu Lord Krishna attends a fancy dress competition at a temple during celebrations before the Janmashtami festival.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters

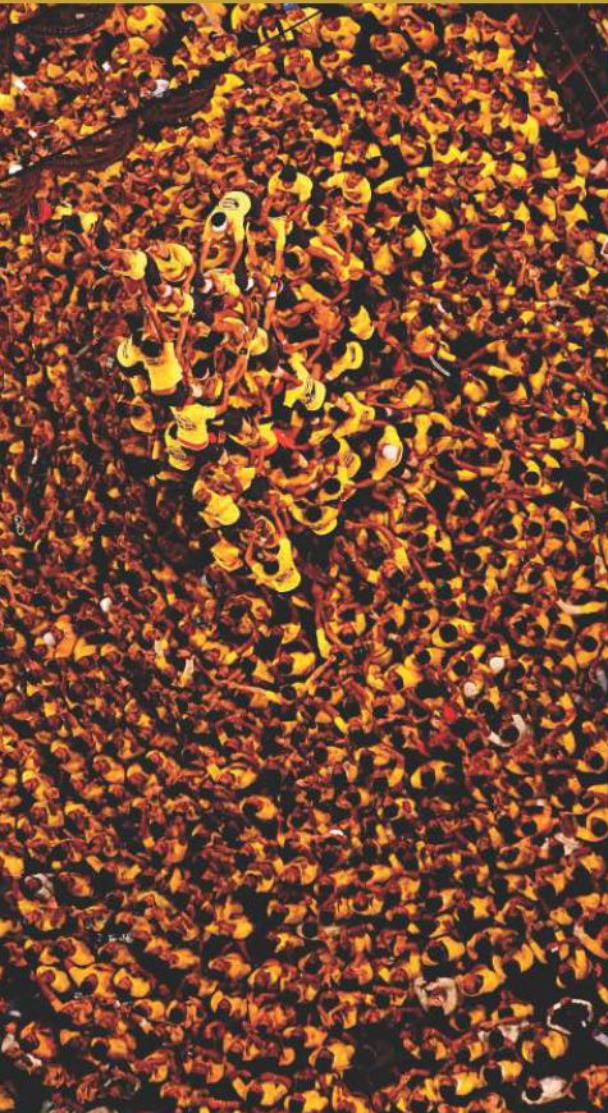


Rasa Lila

Photo © Kalpana Chatterjee

Rasa Lila is the Dance of Divine Love and takes place when the *gopis* of Vrindavan are serenaded by the lilting sounds of Lord Krishna's flute.

An integral part of Krishna *bhakti* traditions, the Rasa Lila is a popular form of folk theatre in the regions of Mathura and Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh and the tradition of Vaishnavism of Manipur. The Rasa is performed during Krishna Janmashtami and Holi.



Janmashtami celebrations in Mumbai
Photo © SandeepaChetan



Indian Woman
Photo © Rajtilak Naik

A Muslim woman was seen returning home along with her son dressed in the attire of Hindu Lord Krishna soon after attending a *Dahi Handi* breaking competition (A Hindu festival) in the latter's school on the occasion of Krishna Janmashtami festival in Panaji.

This photograph shoots a very strong message and portrays the role of the ideal Indian woman (irrespective of religion) with respect to national unity, and her powerful role in strengthening unity in the country. This sidelines all extremist points of view of religion, in the process bringing out the true essence of brotherhood and national unity.

Janmashtami is the annual celebration of the birth of the most beloved Hindu god, the eighth *avatar* of Vishnu, Krishna. It takes place every year sometime during the month of *Shravan* (August-September) in the Hindu calendar.

In the historic temple cities of Mathura (birthplace of Lord Krishna) and Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh the festival is celebrated with special meaning and reverence. Rasa Lila, dramatic enactments of the life of Krishna are performed in these regions with great gusto.

MAHA SHIVRATRI



The Lord

A young boy dressed as Shiva on the eve of Maha Shivratri.

Photo © Jassi Oberai



God with his Mother

A child dressed as Shiva on the eve of Maha Shivratri.

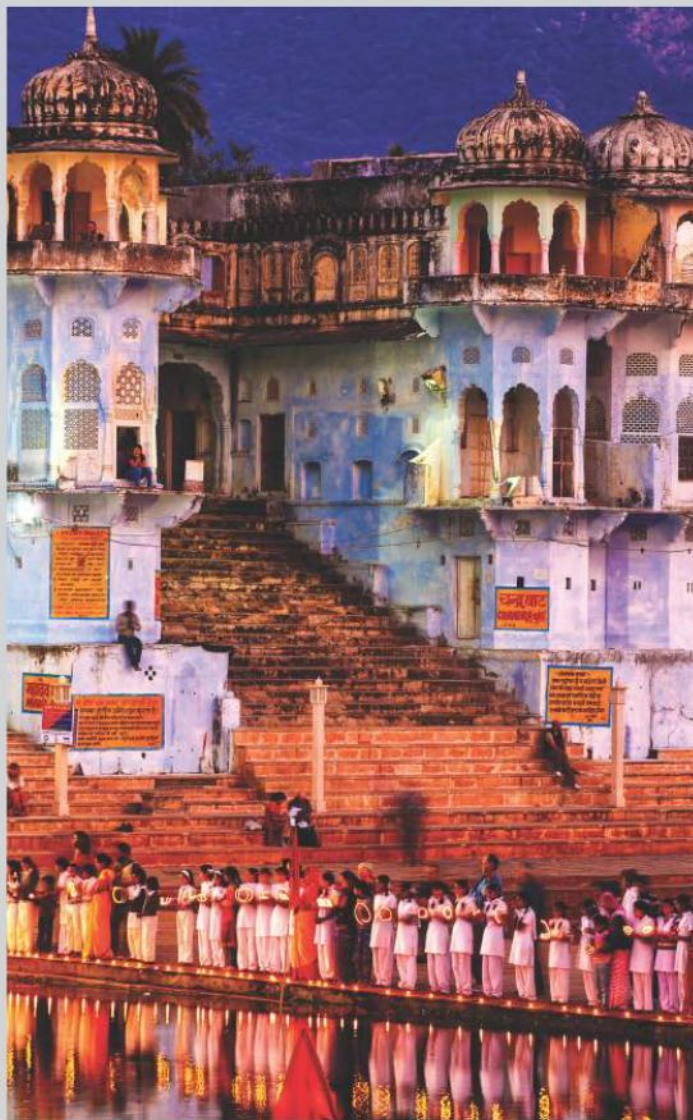
Photo © Jassi Oberai

Maha Shivratri is a Hindu festival celebrated in reverence of "the Destroyer" or "the Transformer" Lord Shiva.

Shivratri is the day, Shiva was married to the goddess Parvati and so Maha Shivratri or the 'Great Night of Shiva' marks the convergence of Shiva and Shakti.

PUSHKAR FESTIVAL

Held every year around November, the Pushkar Fair is a religious festival connected to the Brahma Mandir in this small sleepy town in District Ajmer, Rajasthan. Since the festival attracts a large gathering of religious devotees and other visitors, traditionally a cattle fair is also held in the fields adjacent to the Temple.



Hindu pilgrims converge at the fair for a holy dip in the sacred Pushkar Lake to "wash away the sins of a lifetime" and pay obeisance at the only Brahma temple in the world.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters

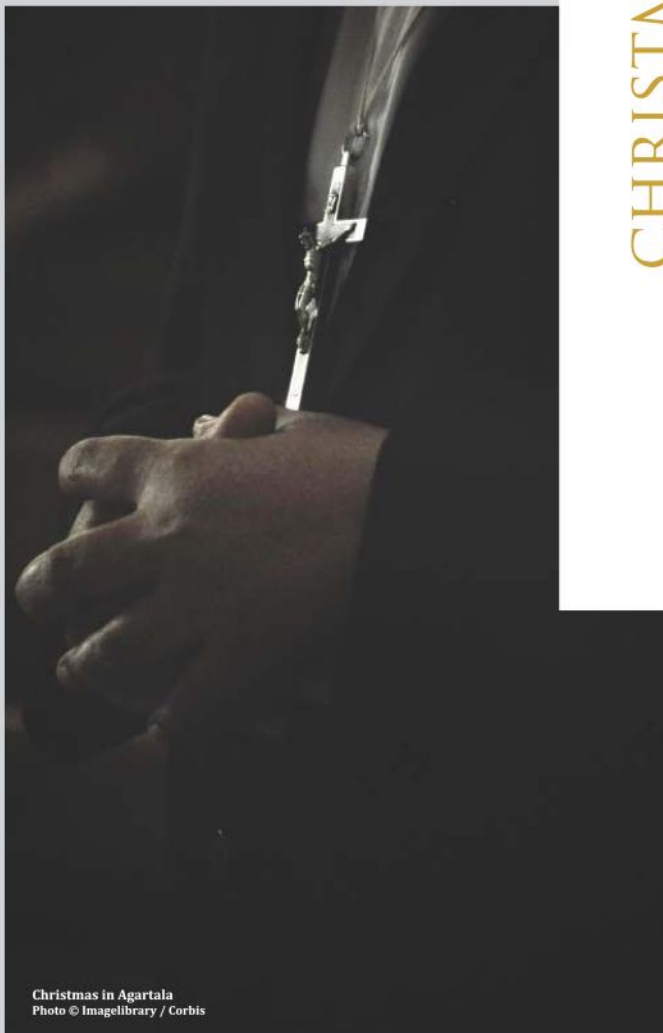
Camels, horses and other cattle are bought and sold at the fair over 5 days, around the full moon of the Hindu calendar month of *Karthik*. Probably more interesting than the camels well groomed and decorated are the local camel sellers who also dress up in their colourful best.

Sunset at Pushkar Fair
Photo © Alamy



Pushkar Cattle Fair
Photo © Jassi Oberai

CHRISTMAS



Christmas in Agartala
Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis



Candle light midnight mass at St. Paul's cathedral, Kolkata

The birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated across the world at midnight between the 24th and 25th of December, followed by a day of prayer and celebrations on the 25th. In India too Christmas is celebrated with great gusto, not just by Christians, but by members of other communities too.

The celebrations begin with a midnight mass across cathedrals, churches, and small chapels all around the country and carol singing too.

Photo Credit: © Alamy



Photo © Alamy

While private celebrations and family parties are very popular, the festivities also spill out onto the streets. Hotels and restaurants are brightly decorated, shopping malls beckon festive shoppers in, and revelers head out to soak in the festive spirit. A public holiday across the country, Christmas celebrations differ culturally across the country; in the north of India, the day is known as *Bada Din* (Big Day), in the south of India people light earthen lamps at home, much like Hindus do at Diwali, while Christmas in Goa is an exhilarating experience that beckons both domestic and international tourists.

People enjoy Christmas at Janpath Market on December 25, in New Delhi, India. Despite Christians forming a little over two percent of the billion plus population in India with Hindus comprising the majority, Christmas is celebrated with fanfare and zeal throughout the country.

Photo © Getty Images



Indian Christian nuns pray at a Catholic cemetery on All Souls' Day.

All Souls' Day is a solemn celebration in the Roman Catholic Church commemorating the dead. It takes place on the 2nd of November every year, after the very popular Halloween (31st October) and All Saints' Day (1st November).

It is a day of prayer for those who have died and are in Purgatory, an intermediate state after physical death in which those destined for heaven "undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven".

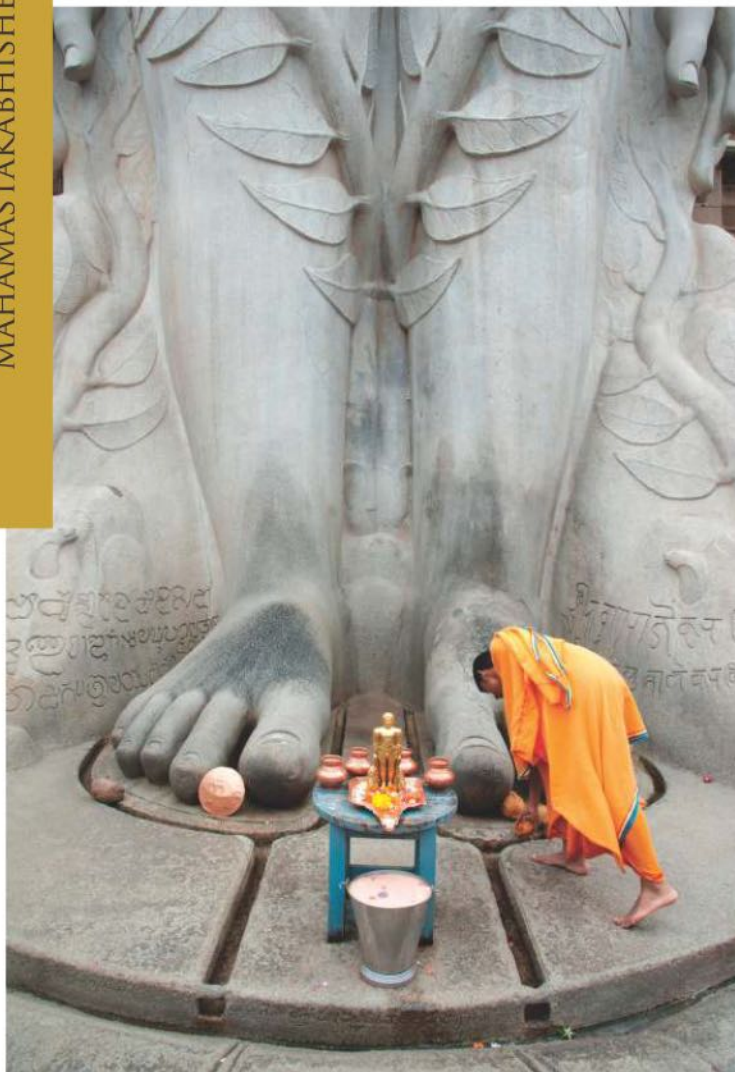
Photo © Avishek Mazumder

The Mahamastakabhisheka is an important Jain festival that takes place every 12 years in veneration of Gommateshwara or Siddha Bahubali, the first tirthankara and founder of Jainism. The festival takes place in the town of Shravanabelagola in Karnataka, and involves the anointing of the 57 feet tall colossal monolithic statue of Lord Bahubali with milk, saffron, and flowers.

The elaborate ceremony is marked with prayers, and Jain monks carry holy water from the Digambar Jain *mutt* to the venue. Amidst chanting of hymns, the statue is bathed and anointed with libations such as milk, sugarcane juice, and saffron paste, and sprinkled with powders of sandalwood, turmeric, and vermilion.

Offerings are made of petals, gold and silver coins, and precious stones.

Photo © adishesan shankar / Alamy



MAHAMASTAKABHISHEKA
Priest offering prayers at the statue of Bahubali (Gommateshwara)

A Parsi family prays at a fire temple on the occasion of Navroz, the Parsi new year day, in Mumbai.

Photo © Imagelibrary / EPA



The Parsi New Year is celebrated as Jamshed Navroz by the Zoroastrian Parsis in India. The festival falls on the first day of the month of the *Fasli* calendar, usually on the 21st of March every year.

It is named after the legendary king of Persia, Jamshed and as per mythology, the universe is recreated on this day and thus life is celebrated with renewed vigour.

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HOLLA MOHALLA



Holla Mohalla Celebration in Punjab

Photo © Gaurav Agarwal

The word Holla is derived from *halla*, which is a military charge and Mohalla is an organised procession or an army column. Holla Mohalla thus implies "the charge of the army". Holla Mohalla is a 3 day Sikh festival that takes place on the second day of the lunar month of *Chett* (a day after Holi) in March, at Anandpur Sahib.

Founded by the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, Holla Mohalla builds on the festival of Holi. In his fight against the Mughal empire, Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa, and started a new tradition of overseeing a day of mock battles and a day for the Sikhs to display their martial skills, with the first such procession held at Holgarh fort, at Anandpur Sahib in 1700. The festival is also marked by *keertan durbars* talks, exhibitions, tournaments and a display of valour.

Holla Mohalla Celebration in Punjab

Charging horse and rider at the Sikh festival, Holla Mohalla festival, Anandpursahib, Punjab.

Photo © Jim Zuckerman / Alamy Stock Photo

HOLLA MOHALLA



Holla Mohalla Celebrations at Golden Temple

Holla Mohalla marked with scented showers at Golden Temple Amritsar, India. The occasion of Holi, and Holla Mohalla is marked at the Golden Temple with the traditional showering of scented sprays on the holy palanquin carrying the Guru Granth Sahib during the closing ceremony or 'Sukh Asaan'.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis



Sikhs Celebrate Holla Mohalla

A Nihang, or traditional Sikh religious warrior, displays swordsmanship in a mock fight at the annual fair of "Holla Mohalla" in Anandpur Sahib, 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Chandigarh. Believers from various parts of northern India gather at the traditional religious fair to celebrate the festival of Holi in a tradition established by the tenth Sikh guru Guru Gobind Singh in the 17th century. The Nihangs display their martial skills and attire during the fair, believed to be maintained in the exact tradition as set by the Guru.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis



Devotees light lamps near the sacred pond of the illuminated Golden Temple, the holiest of Sikh shrines, on the occasion of Diwali festival and Bandi Chhorh Diwas in Amritsar, India.

Photo © Imagelibrary / EPA

BANDI CHHOR DIWAS



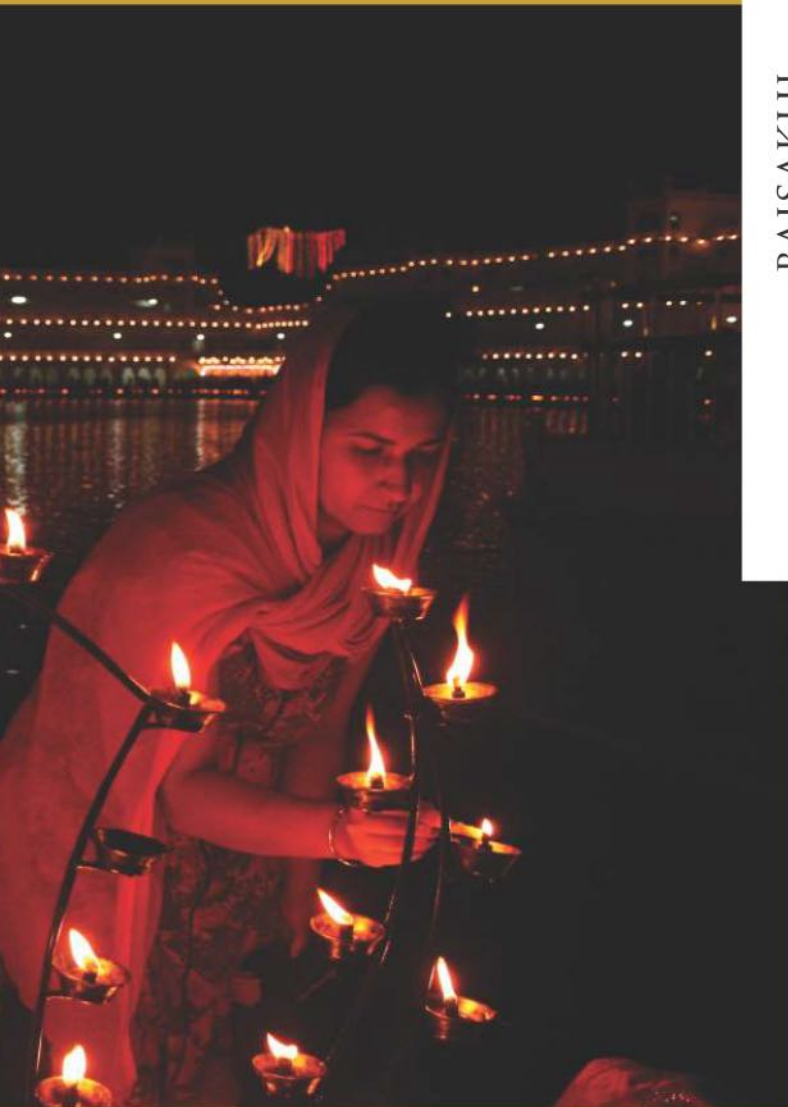
Sikh man belonging to the armed Sikh order Nihang, wearing an over- sized turban shouts religious slogans while brandishing his sword during the Mohalla religious procession on Bandi Chhor Diwas, in Amritsar, India

Photo © Imagelibrary / EPA



Bandi Chhor Diwas (Day of Liberation) coincides with Diwali and celebrates the release of Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, from the Gwalior fort prison and his return to Amritsar, during the reign of Mughal emperor Jahangir. Devotees visit the Golden Temple from pre-dawn hours to seek blessings. The day is marked with religious congregations at the *Akal Takhat*, and also the Mohalla where members of the armed Sikh order, Nihang display their martial arts skills.

With the return of the Guru, Diwali assumed a whole new meaning for the Sikhs; the day the Guru returned to Amritsar, the Har Mandar (now known as the Golden Temple) was lit up with hundreds of lamps. Since then, this day is celebrated with great pomp and splendour, and devotees take an early morning dip in the sacred tank and light earthen oil lamps.



BAISAKHI

**An Indian woman lights lamps
at the Golden Temple on the special occasion
of the Baisakhi festival in Amritsar.**

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters

Baisakhi is a harvest festival celebrated in the Punjab region and coincides with the first day of *Vaisakh* month. Baisakhi is especially important for the Sikh community as it marks the establishment of the Khalsa, the collective body of fully initiated Sikhs, to which devout orthodox Sikhs are ritually admitted at puberty.





TEEJ

Women from the Women's Khalsa College, wearing traditional Punjabi attire perform the folk dance from Punjab 'Giddha' during an event to celebrate Teej Festival in Amritsar.

Photo © Imagelibrary / EPA

Teej festival is celebrated during the *Saawan* month which falls in July-August.

The folk songs the women and girls sing are dedicated to their husbands or to-be-husbands, symbolising true love and sacrificial nature of Punjabi women for their love.

LOHRI

Flying kites during Lohri celebrations

Photo © Imagelibrary / EPA

Celebrated typically in the state of Punjab, Lohri commemorates the passing of the winter solstice, and is celebrated on the shortest day of the year.

The Lohri night is believed to be the longest night in the year, followed the next day by the *Maghi Sangrand* which is when the days start getting longer.

On Lohri day people fly kites in the day and light bonfires in the night to celebrate the event. Some of the delicacies that people eat at Lohri are *Gajak*, *Sarson da saag* with *Makki di roti*, radish, ground nuts and jaggery.

Traditionally, *til* rice made by mixing jaggery, sesame seeds and rice is also eaten.



KARVA CHAATH



Indian women look at the moon through sieves as part of a ritual during prayers as they observe fast on the occasion of Karva Chauth festival in Bhopal, India.

Photo © Imagelibrary / EPA

Hindu married women observe a day long fast from sunrise to moonrise, and pray for the longevity and well being of their husbands on Karva Chauth, and break the fast only after sighting the moon.

The evening of Karva Chauth is marked by a gathering of fasting women dressed in their best finery, (usually red and gold that are very auspicious). The women partake in a ritual of ceremonies, *pooja* and storytelling, while passing the *pooja thali* (pooja plate) around to one another. The festival falls on the fourth day of the full moon in the Hindu calendar month of *Karthik*.



Holi Singers at Nandgaon

Photo © Sreeranj Sridhar

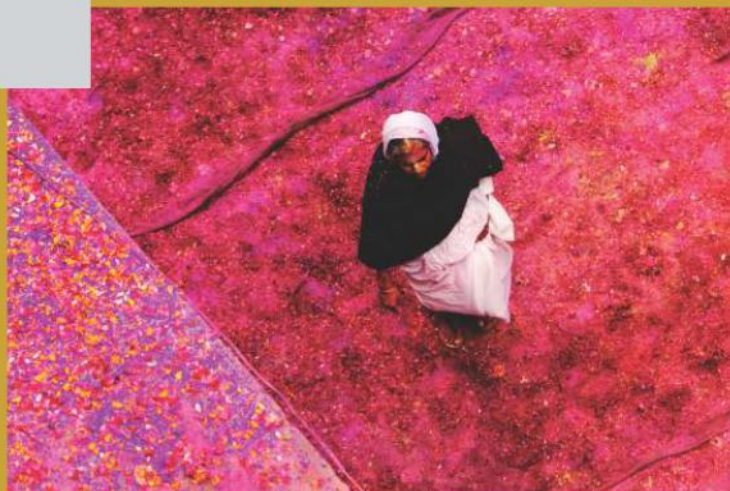
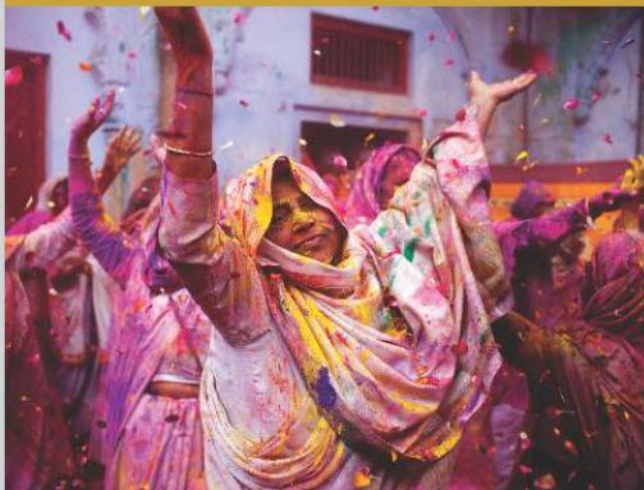
Holi is the beautiful spring festival of colours and love. It's the most popular Hindu festival that needs little introduction in most parts of the world. Holi celebrations start the night before with the tradition of 'Holika Dahan' - the lighting of bonfires symbolising the victory of good over evil which stems from the legend of demon king Hiranyakashyap who plotted to kill his blessed son Prahlad.

The king's sister who was in on the murderous plan was the one who eventually died in a fire (killed by Lord Vishnu) and Prahlad's life was spared. The next morning, on the day of Holi, people play with coloured powder, water guns (pichkaris), and water balloons. The festival is also celebrated as a thanksgiving for a good harvest.

HOLI

Indian widow covered with coloured powder dances as she takes part in celebrations for the spring festival of Holi at the Meerasahabhagini Ashram in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh.

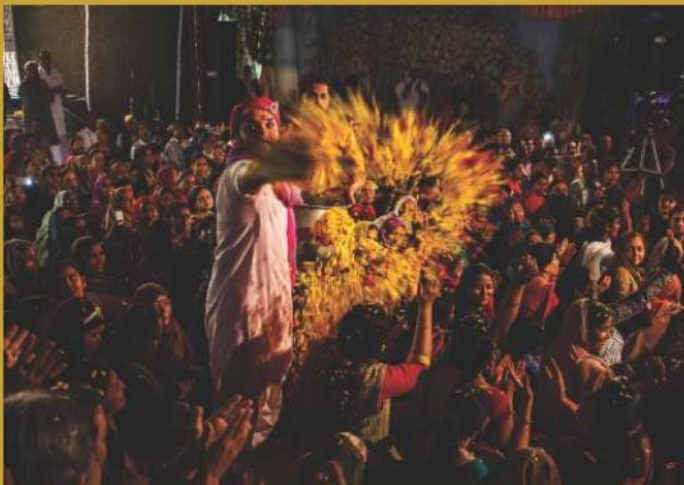
Photo © Imagelibrary/Reuters



A widow going to her room after Holi celebrations at the century old 'Pagal Baba Ashram' in Vrindavan, India.

Photo © Imagelibrary/Reuters

Photo © Sreeranj Sridhar



HOLI

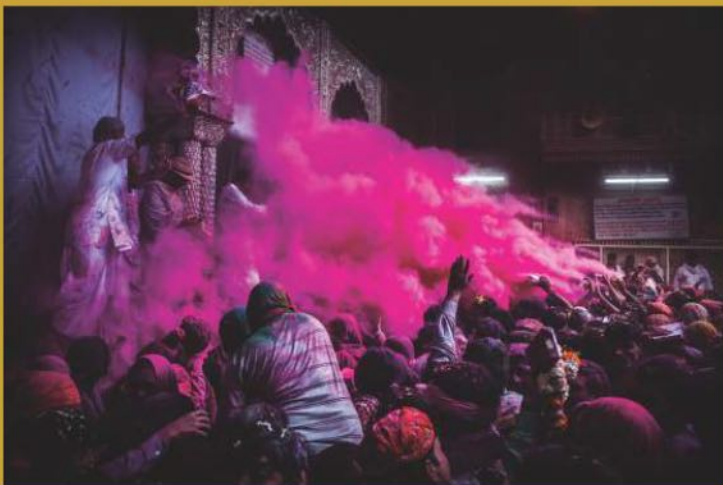


Photo © Sreeranj Sridhar





Holi celebrations at Vrindavan temple

Photo © Sreeranj Sridhar





HOLI

Lathmar Holi takes place a day before Holi in the neighbouring towns of Barsana and Nandgaon near Mathura, in Uttar Pradesh. This is the Holi where women beat the men folk with sticks or laath.

According to legend, Lord Krishna visited his beloved Radha's village on this day and playfully teased the women of Barsana. Taking offence to this, the women chased him away. Since then, men from Nandgaon visit Barsana on this day, sing provocative songs, and in retaliation the women beat them up with sticks, breaking into intervals to sip the intoxicating thandai, made of cannabis.

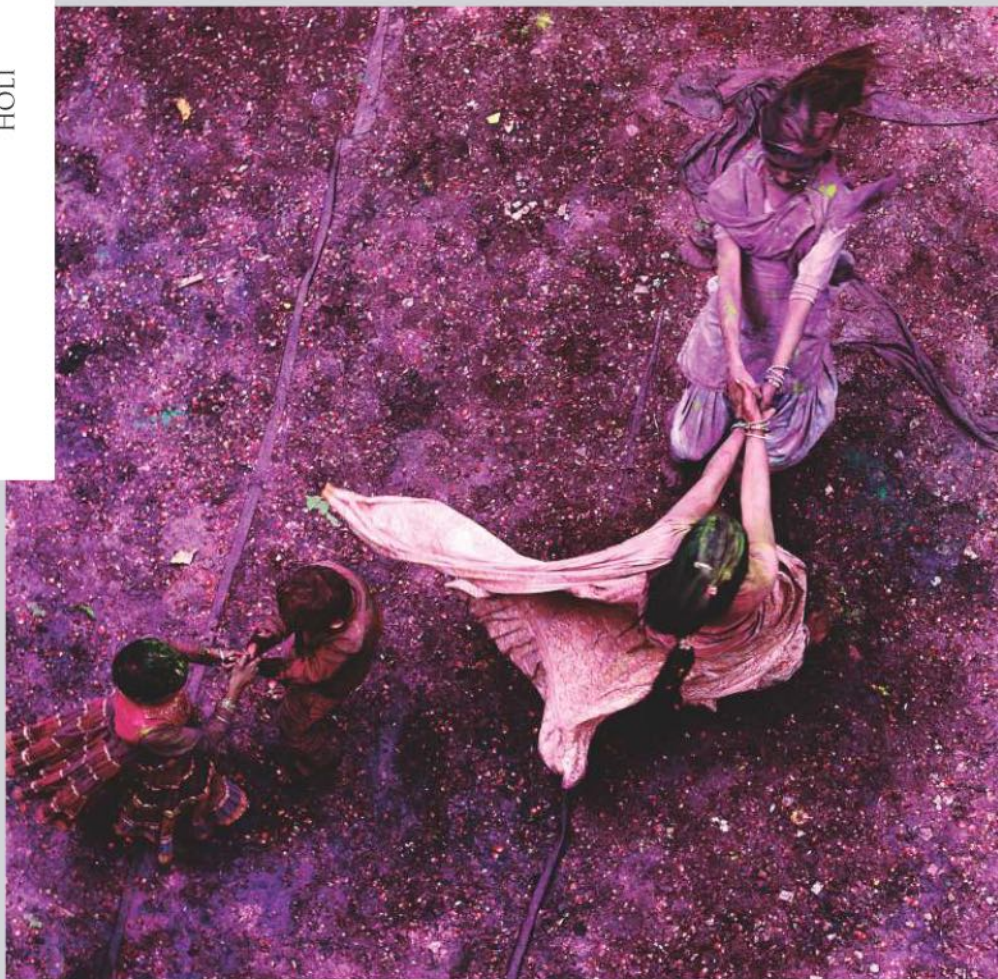
On the first day of Lathmar Holi, the gops (cow-herds) from Nandgaon head to Barsana to play Holi with the gopis (cow-herd girl) there. The festival begins with a ceremony at the only temple in all of India dedicated to Radha, the Radha Rani temple. The gops then march out of the temple and stop to play holi with the gopis, who stand in groups along the street.

On the second day of the festival, the gops from Barsana head to Nandgaon to play holi with the gopis at Nandgaon.

Holi Singers at Nandgaon, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh.

Photo © Sreeranj Sridhar

HOLI



Girls plays Holi together at an ashram in Vrindavan.
Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis

Flowers pelt on a woman in Varanasi during the celebration of Holi or the festival of colors, at Assi Ghat in Varanasi.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis



A woman immersed in colours performs a dance as she celebrates Holi festival outside the Bakebihari temple in Vindravan.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis

HOLI



Holi Singers at Nandgaon, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh.
Photo © Amit Rane

MANGO FESTIVAL



A priest arranges an offering of mangoes for the Hindu god Lord Krishna during a mango festival in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad. During India's mango season, around March to June, the king of fruits is widely sold, celebrated, and of course eaten.

Photo © Imagelibrary/Corbis



Hindu devotee offers prayers to the Sun during the Chhath festival while standing in a water body.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters

CHHATH



Chhath Festival Kolkata

Photo © Avishek Mazumder

Chhath is possibly the only Hindu and Vedic festival that is dedicated to *Surya* the Sun God and the Vedic Goddess *Chhathi Maiya*, also known as Usha.

The festival is celebrated to promote well being, prosperity, and progress; a thanksgiving to the sun for sustaining life on earth.

This ritualistic festival is celebrated over a period of 4 days, that includes a holy bath, fasting, abstaining from drinking water, and paying obeisance to the setting and rising sun.

Chhath is fervently celebrated in the Mithila and Terai regions of Nepal, and in India, across the states of Delhi, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Eastern Uttar Pradesh.



Hindu devotees stand in the waters of river Yamuna to offer prayers to the Sun god during the Hindu religious festival "Chhath Puja", at dawn in New Delhi.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters

CHHATH



Women performing Thiruvathirakali on Onam.

Thiruvathirakali is a dance performed by women, in order to attain everlasting marital bliss. The graceful movements of the women dancing around a *nilavilakku* (a traditional lamp commonly used in Kerala), embody 'lasya' - the mythological feminine dance performed by Goddess Parvati in response to the male energy of the cosmic dance of Lord Shiva. Thiruvathirakali follows a circular, pirouetting pattern accompanied by clapping of the hands and singing.

Photo © Bhooshan Iyer



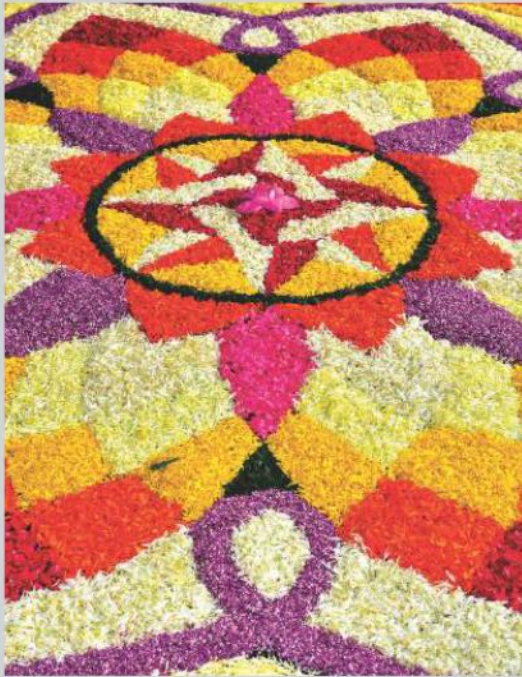
Puli Kali, meaning tiger dance, is a popular folk art festival during Onam celebrations in Kerala. Mainly practiced in the city of Thrissur and surrounding areas, the performers' bodies are painted with similar hues and strips of tigers. And later, hundreds of them, dancing, and shaking their bellies to the beat of the drums, parade through the streets of Thrissur.

Photo © Imagelibrary/Corbis



Offerings to Thirikkakara Appan on Plantain leaf. Thirikkakara Appan is a clay pyramid structure with four faces and a flat top, representing Vamana, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

Thirikkakara Appan is the presiding deity of the Thirikkakara temple in Ernakulam district of Kerala and is associated with the legend of Onam.



Athapookkalam

Floral decorations (athapookkalam) during Onam celebrations. Athapookkalam or Onapookalam is a traditional floral arrangement or a flower bed that is created during Onam, in Kerala.

Considered a work of art, the Athapookkalam is a distant cousin of the rangoli that is made from coloured powders. Athapookkalam is made on the *Atham* day, ten days before Thirunam (the most auspicious day during the festival of Onam).

Traditionally the Athapookkalam consists of ten rings that represent 10 different Hindu deities. The floral carpet also symbolically represents the fight between the Asuras (demons) and the Devas (demi-gods).

Photo © Alamy



Onam is celebrated in Kerala during the Malayalam month of *Chingam* and commemorates the homecoming of the mythical king *Mahabali*. The festival is marked by numerous cultural and ritualistic activities, one of them being the snake boat race, known as the Vallamkali.

About 100 oarsmen row huge and graceful snake boats while people watch from the banks of the rivers, cheering for their teams. Well-known races include the Aranmula Uthattadhi Boat Race and the Nehru Trophy Boat Race



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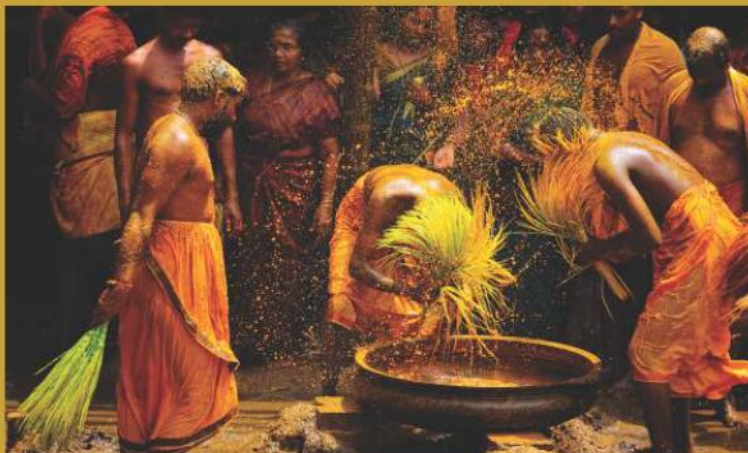
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MANJA NEERATTU





**Devotees taking a turmeric bath at Vandimala temple
in Chengannur, Kerala.**

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters

Manja Neerattu is a special offering by the devotees to Goddess Parvati at the Vandimala temple. Accompanied by stories of Mutaramma and prayers, the devout bathe in hot turmeric solutions prepared by mixing boiling turmeric powder, ashtagandha powder (a mixture of 8 different holy powders), rose water, saffron, flowers, and perfumes in large vessels.

Post the Manja Neerattu, the temple closes for 3 days, during which time the Goddess is believed to return to Kanjipuram, her place of origin, before she returns once again.

AATUKAL PONGALA

Aatukal is a Hindu pilgrimage centre in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, and the Aatukal Bhagavaty temple here is popularly described as the 'Sabarimala for women'.

Photos © Shreeranj Shreedhar



The Pongala Mahotsavam is the most important festival at the temple and has been entered in the Guinness records for being the largest single gathering of women for a religious activity.

This is a ten day festival commencing in the Malayalam month *Makaram-Kumbham* (February-March), and ends with a sacrificial offering called the *Kuruthitharpanam* at night. The ninth day of the festival is witness to the *Aatukal Pongala Mahotsavam*, which covers an area of almost 5 kilometres around the temple premises.

THEYYAM

Theyyam is a popular form of ritualistic worship in the North Malabar region of Kerala, where the male dancer dons the guise of God. People from these regions consider Theyyam as God and seek blessings. The performance of the Theyyam is believed to remove all obstacles and lead to prosperity.

Theyyam Puthiya Bhagavathi entering into a trance and becoming the goddess.

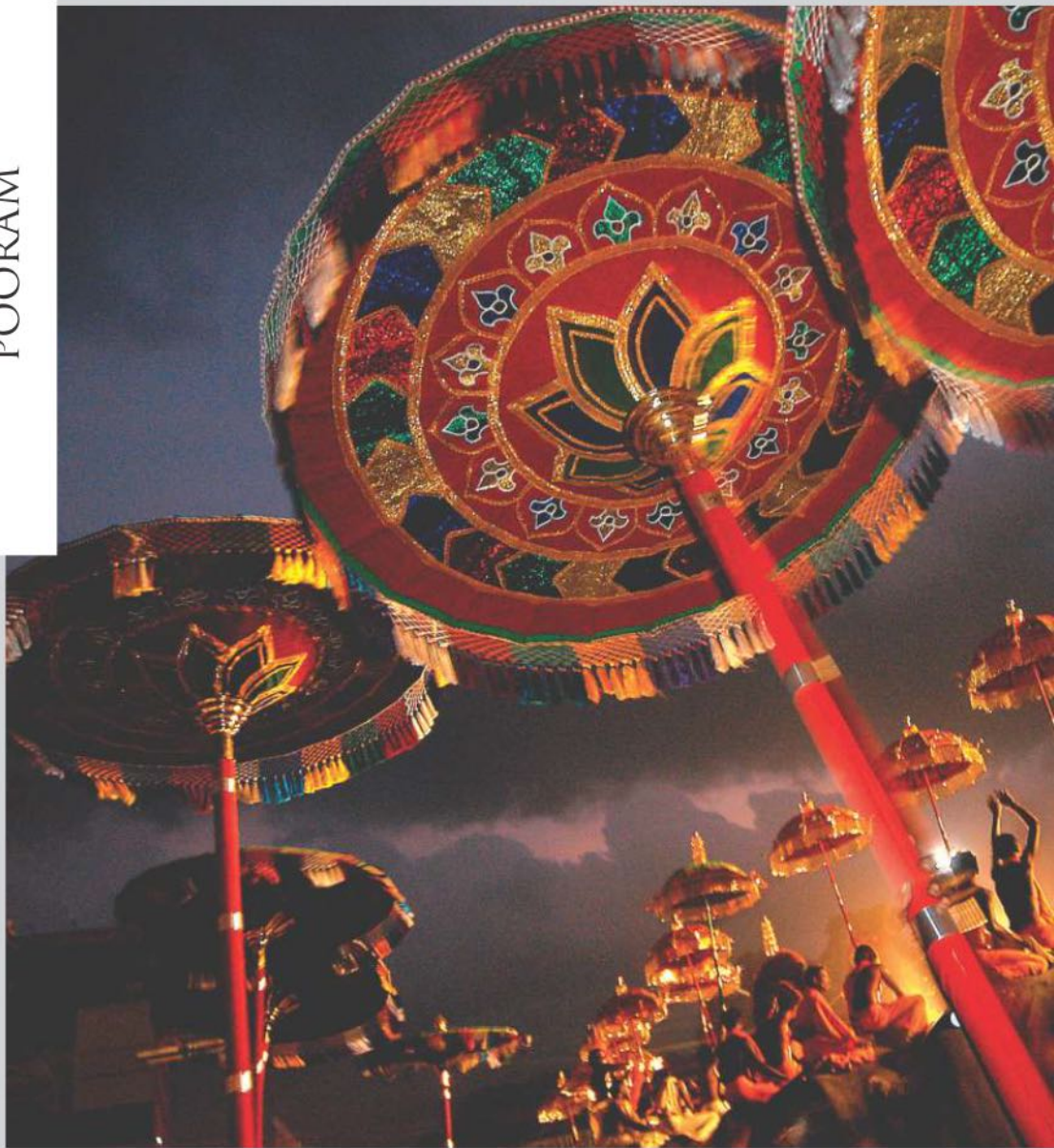
Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters



Kutti Theyyam blessing a devotee.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters

POORAM



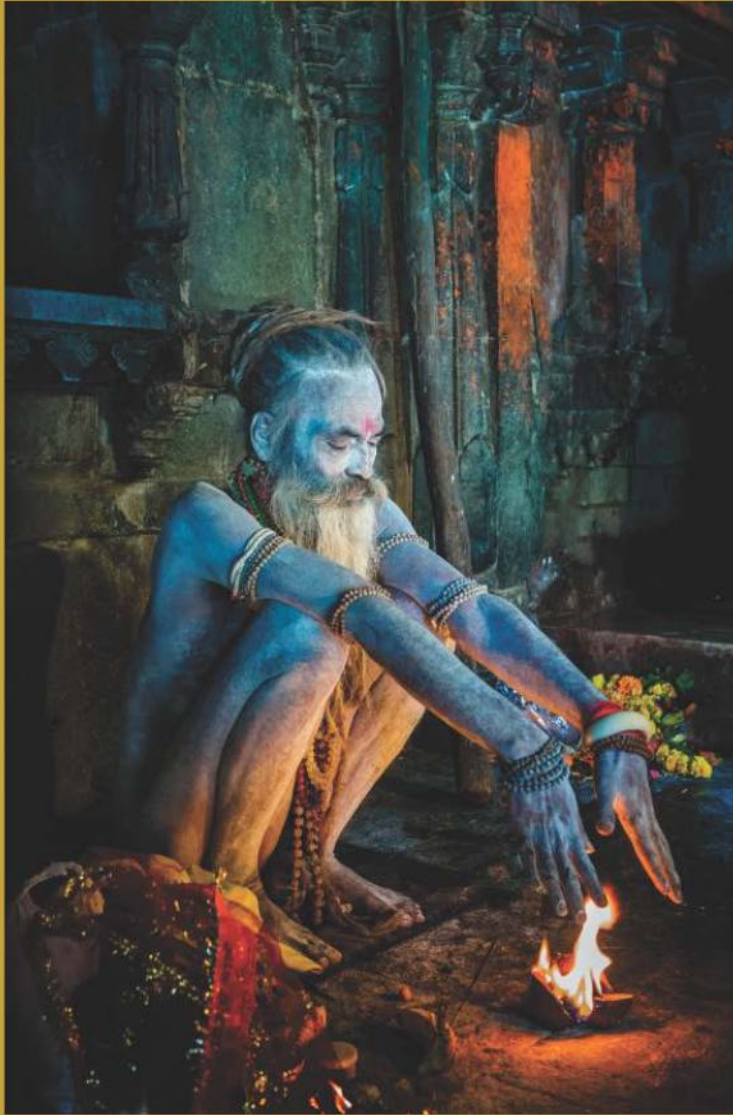


The grand finale of Pooram is the most colourful of all the temple festivals of Kerala and is celebrated at Thrissur's Vadakkumnathan temple in the month of *Medam* (April) which attracts thousands of devotees and tourists.

The best elephants of the state from various temples in Kerala are sent to Thrissur to participate in the Pooram festival.

Colourful parasols being exchanged during the 'Kudamattom' (umbrella exchange) event on the penultimate day of the 'Pooram' Festival celebrations at Thrissur town in the state of Kerala.

Photo © Imagelibrary/EPA



Varanasi, the sacred Hindu city of India on the river Ganges, is home to Aghoris - a set of *sadhus* or holy men who are ascetics and are considered by Hindus as representatives of the gods. Their dreadlocks and disheveled appearance are symbolic of their renunciation of material life.

Photo © Amit Rane

Kumbh Mela is a mass Hindu pilgrimage of faith in which Hindus gather to bathe in a sacred river. Considered to be the largest peaceful gathering in the world, the Kumbh Mela takes place every third year at one of the four places by rotation - Haridwar, Allahabad (Prayaga), Nashik and Ujjain.

The rivers at these places are the Ganga, the confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna, the mythical Saraswati, the Godavari, and the Shipra respectively.

Photo © Soumyadeep Paul



KUMBH MELA



Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis

KUMBH MELA



Devotees walk on foot towards the *Sangam* 'the confluence of 3 holy rivers' during a sudden early morning fog that descends upon Allahabad. This festival takes place after every 12 years.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis

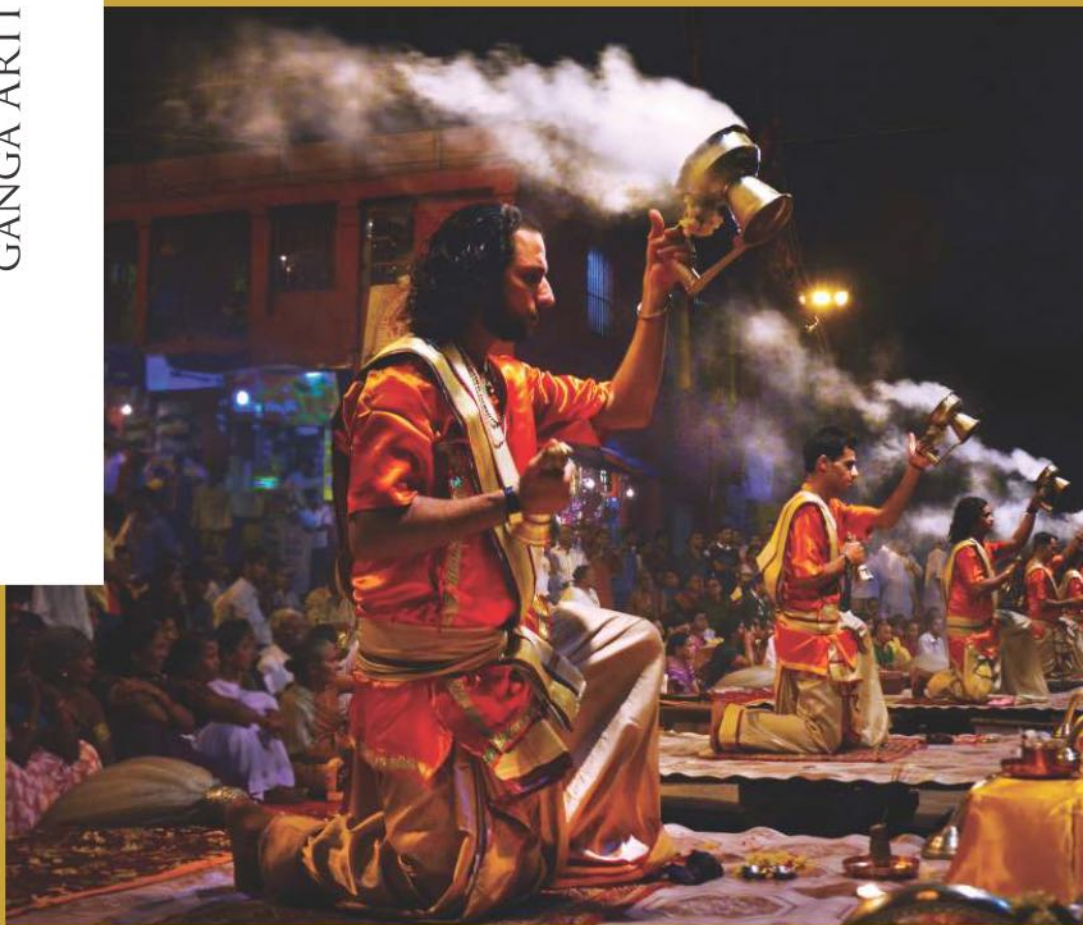


Hindu pilgrims wake up on a cold winter morning and prepare breakfast before taking a holy bath at the confluence of the rivers Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati during the Ardh Kumbh Mela festival in Allahabad, India.

Hundreds of Hindu holy men, naked but for the ash smeared on their bodies and an occasional marigold garland, lead a sea of humanity to the waters of the Ganges River to wash away their sins at the peak of a week-long pilgrimage. About 30 million people take a dip during this festival.

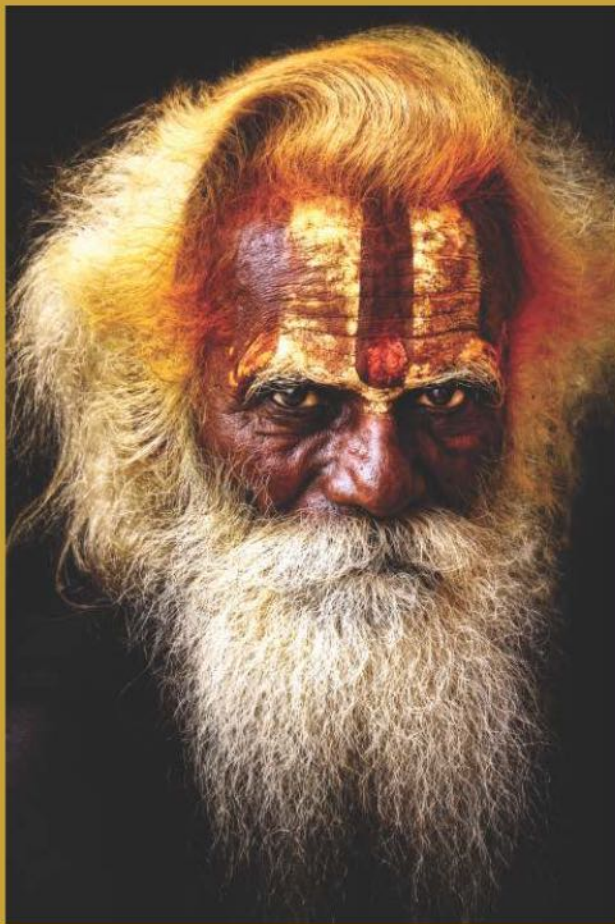
Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis

GANGA ARTI



Ganga Arti Varanasi
Photo © Avishek Mazumder

Dashashwamedh Ghat, located near Vishwanath Temple, is the most prominent ghat in Varanasi on the holy river Ganges. Every evening, a group of priests perform "Agni Pooja" or Ganga Aarti here in veneration of Lord Shiva, River Ganga, Surya (the sun), Agni (Fire), and the entire universe.



A priest at Varanasi Ganga Ghat.
Photo © Avishek Mazumder

GANGA ARTI



Special Ganga puja during Diwali

Lighting Oil Lamps on the Banks of the Ganges River for the Festival of Lights. The banks of the Ganges is lit up with thousands of candles for the Festival of Lights, the third night of Diwali.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Corbis

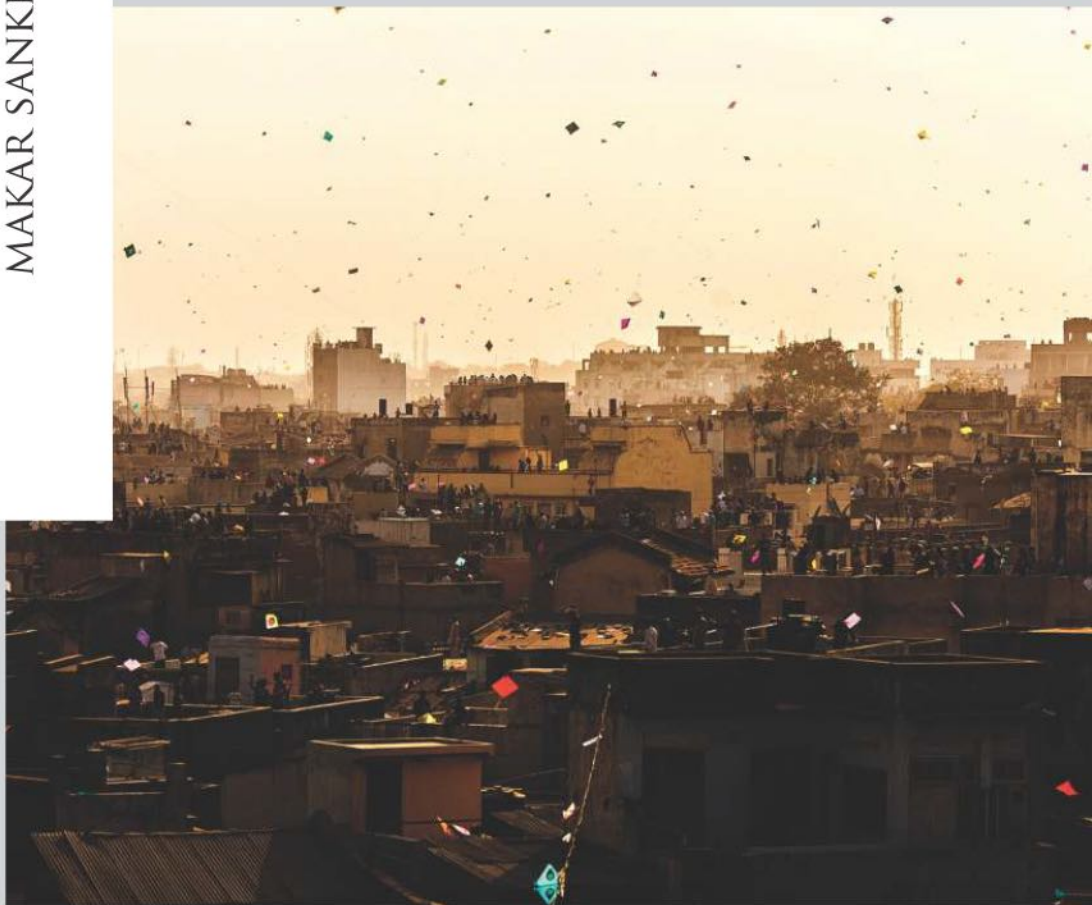


Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, offering of incense to the Ganges during Ganga Arti at Dashashwamedh Ghat.

Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters

MAKAR SANKRANTI

Makar Sankranti is a harvest festival celebrated with much pomp in various parts of India. When the sun moves from the Tropic of Cancer to the Tropic of Capricorn or from Dakshinayana to Uttarayana in the lunar calendar, in mid-January, it commemorates the beginning of the harvest season in South India. It is the only Indian festival celebrated on a fixed date of 14th January every year.



City on the roof

Sky filled with kites in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

Photo © Sandeepa Chetan

Visitors buy flowers at a flower market on the eve of pongal or Makara Sankranti festival in Bangalore, India.

Cows and bulls are decorated with bright colours during the celebration of the Hindu festival of thanksgiving that is celebrated after the harvesting season.

Photo © Imagelibrary / EPA



Devotees participating in the 'Three Chariot Festival' in Udupi, Karnataka. The event is held on 'Makara Sankranti' as part of the 'Sapthotsava'.

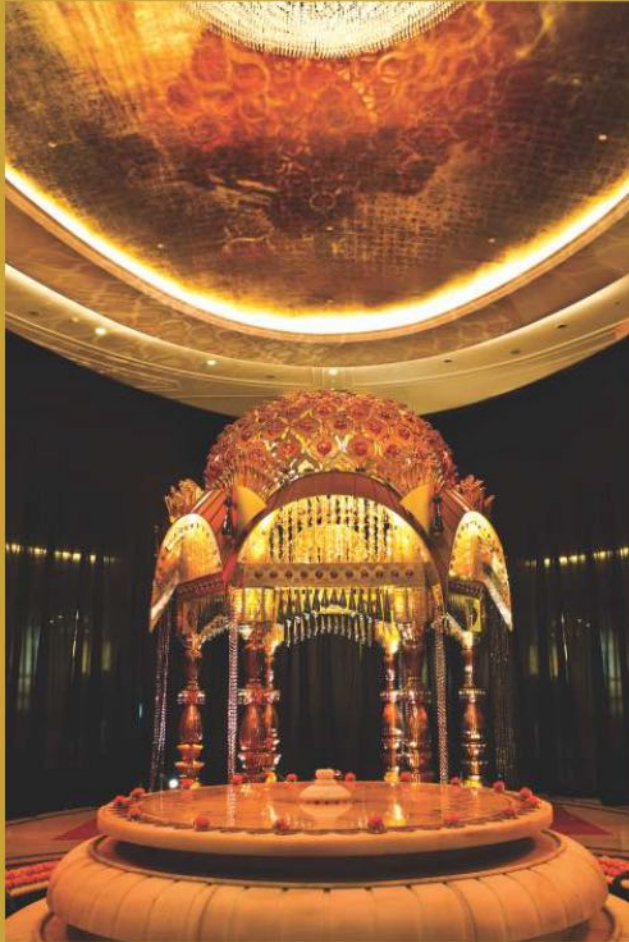
Photo © Imagelibrary / Reuters

LET THERE BE
LIGHT
KLOVE

Design at Klove begins with a fantasy, and meets reality through consideration of ergonomics and functionality.

The aim is to harness each of these design elements and create lighting products that transcend the stereotype to become pieces of contemporary art.





Devalaya

Exclusive and custom made temple collection.



Moroccan Vase

As understood by the name The Moroccan Vase lights have been inspired from The Moroccan Lanterns.



Ashoka pearl

Transforming the Jalis from the palaces into beautiful pendant lights.



Cylinder Drop Chandelier

Cylinder drop chandelier is a modern take on chandeliers with a perfect mix of frosted glass along with silver finished glass drops.

Sunheri Jhumki

Sunheri Jhumki or the epitome of golden luxury, is inspired by the bride's earrings. In traditional jewelry, Jhumkis are an eternal favorite ageless design of earrings that are in vogue since years.

Sunheri Jhumki, at Klove is a striking and exotic chandelier in a circular dome shape, for a gorgeous look that can harmonise with any occasion.





Prateek Jain and Gautam Seth, the "lighting boys" and co-founders of Klove, feel that light designing is all about experimenting, training, adventure and risk.

They are responsible for the many sculptures, installations, chandeliers, wall mural concepts, lamps, pendant lights, outdoor lights, screens, and smaller home accessories in the award-winning Klove repertoire.

"Our lights are form-based and rooted in Indian culture and this seeps into everything we design and produce. Indian architecture especially temples, jewellery, and festivals are a constant source of inspiration.

We seek to continuously navigate our journey by exploring different forms in the fluidity of hand-blown glass. Combining this craft with choices such as wire work, brass, silver, aluminium, wrought iron or stainless steel onto new age materials like acrylic is a challenge we enjoy.

Lighting should be in harmony with its surrounding. Be it functional lights or decorative, the element of harmony should not be compromised."

- Prateek Jain and Gautam Seth

Peacock wall mural

A contemporary take on the iridescent Indian bird, peacock wall mural is a combination of blue, green and deep red glass with beaten brass.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Meet the City is grateful to all the contributing photographers who have shared their very valuable works with us, to make this Festival Special issue spectacular.

We are happy to introduce these talented artists to our readers.

(Names in alphabetical order).



Amit Rane

Amit Rane is one of the most skilled wildlife photographers in the DCP family. He has travelled exclusively across the geography of India for more than 18 years, and has in-depth knowledge of difficult terrains spread across the subcontinent. He is extremely adept at all genres of wildlife photography ranging from bird photography to mammals, from landscapes to macro photography and from reptiles to amphibians. Amit is a trained herpetologist and loves reptiles. He is also a regular travel photographer and writer, and deeply interested in fashion photography too. Amit also displays a great teaching acumen, and is a trainer, biodiversity expert, wildlife photography advisor, and holds the chair of Director, Outbound Expeditions, Team DCP.



Avishek Mazumder

Avishek Mazumder is an amateur photographer from Santipur, a small village in West Bengal, India. He has a M. Sc. degree in Biotechnology but his heart has always been invested in the field of photography. He has been pursuing it for 3 years now and has already been the recipient of many National and International Competition Awards, including the prestigious FIAP GOLD medal, UPI Bronze, PSA Bronze etc. He loves to shoot people and their daily activities, their emotions and expressions - he likes pictures that tell a story. He also has a strong interest in abstract photography and nature & landscape photography.



Chinmoy Mukerji

Chinmoy Mukerji is an IT professional who loves to photograph people in their everyday lives. Immortalising weddings is his speciality. He is the co-founder of Scarlet Weddings - a company that prides itself on making weddings memorable through their images many years after the grand day.



Jassi Oberai

Jassi Oberai (Jasminder) is a Canon Photo Mentor. A self-taught photographer, Jasminder watched his father pursue photography as a serious hobby, and witnessed secrets of the dark room very closely. His love for the craft developed late, but once it did, there was no looking back. As a photographer he does not restrict himself to any particular genre of photography, and he enjoys the challenges of shooting a landscape one day, to a close up the next and dabbling in portraits the day after. He loves nature and the use of colours, rendering most of his works extremely vibrant and colourful. In his own words, "Colours can give a whole new look to something rather mundane or something we are used to. To me that's what I like the most about photography - looking at the world in new ways." Jasminder has been recognised widely and has been on the jury for numerous international contests. He has also represented India in the international arena at the Impression Photo Contest 2014.



Kalpana Chatterjee

A bachelor's degree in Zoology, a stint as a web designer, marriage to an Army officer and two lovely boys later, a usual fallout doesn't yield a photographer. But for Kalpana Chatterjee, her initiation into photography was an outcome of a Sony point and shoot camera, paired with the spare time on hand when her sons went to school. Spending hours photographing garden flowers and birds, she bettered her art by learning the nuances of framing, lighting, etc. The inevitable outcome of this was a DSLR camera, and the thrust into professional photography came when an image of hers was selected as the 'Photo of the Day' by National Geographic. Since then, Kalpana has never looked back. An immense love for the great outdoors gets her ticking and her camera clicking.



Rupesh Jadhav

A software professional from Pune, Rupesh Jadhav enjoys listening to music and travelling, when he is not behind the camera. Passionate about photography, Rupesh has won few awards, judged photography competitions, and conducts workshops for armatures. His works have been published in leading newspapers, and selected and showcased at reputed photography exhibitions in Pune, Thane, Mumbai and Ahmedabad. More recently his work was published in the renowned magazine "Asian Photography".



Rajesh Pamnani

Rajesh Pamnani, Foodie, Entrepreneur, and Rotarian is an avid amateur travel photographer and has travelled extensively across the globe in search of photographic stories to tell. His pictures have been published in local and international magazines. Rajesh has been actively associated with Art for Charity and has been associated with shows that have been involved in raising funds for providing bicycles for children of a rural school, and more recently funds for school children who suffered due to the earthquake in Nepal. He has been capturing the festival of Bonalu since 2010, and each year discovers a new facet to the festival.



Samrat Sengupta

Samrat is a young and dynamic zoologist and a Wildlife expert, specifically working extensively in the forests of North East India for over 5 years. He comes with exhaustive experience of working in the lesser known wild places of North East India including Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, Joypore Rain Forest, Deepor Beel, Orang National Park, Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary, Gibbon Wild Life Sanctuary and much other difficult geography of eastern Himalayas and North East India including Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur studying primate diversities, surveying avifauna conservation status and documenting about tribes, their culture and history.



Sandeepa.Chetan.Com Travel Photography

Sandeepa and Chetan are travel photographers from Mumbai. After quitting their respective jobs and selling their house, they set off on a dream journey together - travelling to and exploring different parts of the world. And that's how their journey of travel and photography started. Their adventures have taken them to Kashmir, Zaskar, Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, and their home state Maharashtra. They also feature in the list of top 10 bloggers in India, and their photographs have been featured in National Geographic, amongst other publications too.



Shashank Mhasawade

Shashank Mhasawade quit his corporate communications job with Microsoft India to start his own visual story telling company, Moments That Matter. A student of the New York Institute of Photography, Shashank has a wide repertoire focusing mainly on candid wedding shoots and films, food photography, corporate photo shoots and videos, events, documentaries. He is also very passionate about street photography. Shashank has been on the 'Band Baaja Bride' show on NDTV Good Times, and his work has been recognised by National Geographic. He was also nominated to the Wedding Photographer of the Year 2012 contest by the Better Photography magazine.



Soumyadeep Paul

Soumyadeep Paul, a student of engineering from Kolkata is a self taught photographer and has been practicing on his own for the past 6 years. Starting off with a Sony point and shoot digital camera he soon moved on to DSLRs and superior lenses. His shots can be categorised as Street Photography, Portraits and Urban Culture. Soumyadeep loves observing beautiful patterns and frames, present in our daily lives and tries to capture these. While he does not intend making photography his full-time profession, he does indeed treasure capturing images on lense and improving himself with every attempt.



Sreeranj Sridhar

Sreeranj Sridhar is a self taught photographer who hails from Kerala, and has been working in Dubai for the past 24 years as an Admin & Human Resources Manager for a multinational company. Sreeranj is passionate about travel photography, environmental portraits, culture and traditions, and festivals and landscapes, with much of his works capturing festivals and cultural events and traditions in India. Sreeranj travels to India three times a year to cover the myriad colourful festivities in different parts of the country.



WHOLESOME LIVING



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PANCHSHIL TOWERS



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