

Celebrations, Festivals, and Fairs of Rajasthan

Festivals and Celebrations

There is a saying in Rajasthan– ‘Saat vaar, nau tyohar’ (Seven days, nine festivals), that is, there are nine festivals in seven days of the week here. The folk celebrations are the expressions of the folk culture. These celebrations, festivals, and fairs are designed in such a way that seasons, time and spirit of people is reflected in them. Often harmonised with the harvesting of crops and changing seasons, these occasions fill the common man with a new energy. These festivals, celebrations and fairs provide physical and mental peace and entertainment in a world of struggle and toil. Here are glimpses of some of the major celebrations, festivals and fairs that reveal the identity of Rajasthan's colourful culture.

Gangaur

Gangaur is a major festival of Rajasthan. Gana means Shiva and Gaur means Gauri Parvati. On this occasion, unmarried girls pray for a suitable groom and married women pray for long life of their husbands by worshipping Shiva and Parvati. This festival spans from Chaitra Krishna Pratipada, the second day of Holi to Chaitra Shukla Tiritiya. On this occasion, the cakes made of the ash of Holi are worshipped with the sprouts of barley. Unmarried girls decorate flowers in vases (kalash) and bring them home, singing songs of Gangaur.

The festival of Gangaur is celebrated by worshipping the idols of Isarji and Gangaur representing Shiva-Parvati. According to the popular belief, it started with the singing of the welcome song by friends of Parvati on her return to her father's house. In memory of this, women decorate the wooden idols of Gangaur and go to the nearby pond or water reservoir with clay idols and wooden idols of Gangaur. They immerse the clay idols, singing and dancing, and bring back the wooden idols and reinstate them. This festival is celebrated with great pomp in princely states of

Jodhpur, Jaipur, Udaipur and Kota.

The procession (savaari) of Gangaur has always been the custom on the occasion of Gangaur. Colonel Tod has given a very interesting account of the Gangaur procession of Udaipur, where women, children and men of all castes, adorned with ornaments and colourful clothes watch Gangaur procession, sitting in their balconies. The procession starts from the palace with the sound of the cannon blast and drums and reaches at Gangaur Ghat of Pichola Lake in all grandeur and ends up after boating and display of fireworks.

Teej

A saying in Rajasthan is very popular – ‘Teej tyohar baori, le doobi Gangaur’, that is, the cycle of festivals starts with Teej in the month of Shraavan and ends with Gangaur.

Celebrated in the month of Shraavan in the rainy season, Teej is the favourite festival of ladies. Girls and the newly-weds celebrate this festival on Shraavan Shukla Tritiya. It is a custom to celebrate this festival at wife’s maternal house first time after marriage. It is believed that the bride and mother in law should not live together during the first Shraavan after marriage, therefore, the in laws send their daughter in law to her maternal house to evade any misfortune.

On this occasion, all the newly-wed ladies would hang a swing on the trees and sing songs related to the season and adornment while swinging. They apply mehndi on hands and feet a day before Teej. Fairs are organized on the banks of ponds. Chickling (moth), millet and beans is also sown in the fields around this festival. Teej festival of the Pink city, Jaipur is famous in Rajasthan. Well decorated elephants, horses, camels, and their mahouts, horsemen clad in uniforms walk in procession with the idol of Teej. Thousands of people come from all over the state to enjoy this festival. People sing folk songs and dance in traditional dresses. Foreign tourists enjoy this view by staying there for hours.

Do you know?

Kajli Teej of Bundi : Where the festival of Teej is celebrated all over Rajasthan on Shravani Teej, it is celebrated in Bundi on Bhadrapad Krishna Tritiya. The joyful procession of Teej in decorated palanquins starts from the picturesque Naval Sagar and ends at Kumbha Stadium.

Holi

Festival of Holi is celebrated on Phalgun Purnima with great enthusiasm and gaiety all over India. Change of season and harvesting of Rabi crops makes people enthusiastic for entertainment. Holika is worshiped on this occasion. People gather to

perform religious rituals in front of the bonfire. The significance of the festival is demonstrated by the dance, music and colour.

The tradition of smearing each other with colours on Holi is almost the same everywhere. But in some places, it also shows diversity. Kodamar Holi is played in Bhinay, in which people divide in two teams and strike each other with ropes dipped in coloured water. Bhagoria Holi is played by tribal people in Udaipur, Banswara, Dungarpur and southern Rajasthan in Mewar. Ger dance is performed on the occasion of Holi in many regions of Mewar.

At a famous Jain pilgrimage site Srimahavirji, Lathmar Holi is played where women strike men with sticks in their hands. Gindad dance is performed on the occasion of Holi in Shekhawati region. In Stone Holi of Barmer, Eloji's marriage procession is taken out, which later turns into sobbing and crying. This entertains people.

'Janam, Maran and Paran' is organized by civilized society on occasion of Holi for the last few years in Jaipur. In this programme, funeral of father, marriage procession of son, and birth of grandson is shown. The two-hundred-year-old Nhan event of Awan and Sangod towns of Kota is also famous. People entertain themselves with games and tamashas.

Akshaya Tritiya

Tritiya of Shukla Paksha of Vaishakh month is called Akshaya Tritiya. Akshaya Tritiya is regarded as an auspicious date for which no muhurat required.

Earlier, a large number of child marriages used to take place on this day without any muhurat in the rural areas, but the numbers have now come down due to the strict attitude of State administration and increasing awareness amongst people. On this day, farmers plough the fields and pray for good rain and harvest. Seven grains including millet, wheat, rice, sesame, barley etc. are worshipped. On this day khichda of wheat-millet etc., galwani of jaggery, and saag of mangodi is made. Being the foundation day of Bikaner, it is celebrated with more enthusiasm there.

All the festivals celebrated in the whole country are celebrated with equal joy and gaiety in Rajasthan. There are many other festivals of Indian folk from the perspective of religion and seasons, among which Rakshabandhan, Janmashtami, Ganesh Chaturthi, Navratri, Dussehra, Deepavali, Makar Sankranti, Sharad Purnima, Basant Panchami, Nag Panchami etc. are prominent.

Apart from these, many festivals related to Jainism are celebrated with great reverence in Rajasthan. Paryushana, the most sacred and important festival of Jains is celebrated in Bhadrapada. On this occasion, devotees go to the temple and perform

self-purification, self-control and obey the rules by performing various rituals of puja, archana, stavan, kirtan, vrat, fasting etc. The last day of this festival is called Samvatasri. On Ashwin Krishna Pratipada, on occasion of Kshamavani festival, all disciples gather at one place and apologize to each other.

Among the Muslim festivals, Eid ul Juha, also known as Bakra Eid, is celebrated on the tenth day of Dhu al-Hijjah in remembrance of the sacrifice of his beloved son Ismail by Ibrahim.

On occasion of bereavement of Muharram, they fast for ten days and on the last day, take out Tajia to commemorate the sacrifice of Hussain Imam, the grandson of Mohammed Saheb. The festival of Bara'a night (Shab e Barat) is very joyous. It is believed that on this day the deeds of all humans are examined and their fate is determined according to their deeds. The festival of Barawafat is celebrated with great devotion by Muslim community as the day of birth and death of Mohammad Saheb. The last day of Ramzan is called Eid-ul-Fitr, the day on which people of Muslim society meet each other, clad in new attire.

New year (January 1), Easter, Good Friday, Christmas, etc., are important Christian celebrations which Christians celebrate with great fervour in church and homes.

Apart from these major folk celebrations, birth anniversaries of great men, vrat and upvas are also celebrated. Among the birth anniversaries, Mahavir Jayanti, Narasimha Jayanti, Hanuman Jayanti, Buddha Jayanti are the main ones. Among the vrat celebrations of Amavasya vrat, Savitri vratas, Nirjala ekadashi, Devjhulani ekadashi, Haritalika teej, Pavitra chaturdashi, Rishi panchami, Anant chaturdashi, Gopashtami, Amla ekadashi are the main vratas.

Fairs

Fair means– gatherings of people at a particular place for the celebration of some occasion. People participate with enthusiasm and gaiety in these fairs. This brings folk culture alive. These festivals, celebrations and fairs have their own songs and culture.

Religion is often at the core of these fairs and festivals but many fairs and festivals are more famous due to their social and economic importance. Pushkarji's fair in Ajmer, Nathdwara's fair in Annakut, Shivratri's fair in Shivad- (Sawai Madhopur), Salasar Hanumanji's fair in Churu district, Dadhimati mata's fair in Goth-Manglod- (Nagaur), Charbhujja's fair near Udaipur, Kaila devi's fair in Karauli, Shivaratri fair in Eklingji, Dhulev fair of Kesariyaji, Bhartrhari fair near Alwar etc. are religious fairs.

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Beneshwar fair of Dungarpur and Sitabari fair of Saharias at Shahabad tehsil, Baran represent the fairs of tribals. Tejaji's fair in Parbatsar, Ramdevji's fair in Runicha, (Pokharan), Pabuji's fair in Kolugarh, Gogaji's fair in Dadrewa are the fairs of folk deities. Fairs of Teej, Gangaur etc. are prominent among seasonal fairs.

Pushkar Fair

Pushkar in Ajmer district is a major centre of the Hindu faith. The only temple of Lord Brahma in India, in which he is duly worshipped is in Pushkar. There is also a temple of Savitri on the hills behind this temple. The full moon fair held in the month of Karthik at Pushkar is unique due to its magnitude. According to a legend, there was once a demon named Vijranath, who had created havoc in Pushkar. The demon intended to kill Brahmaji's sons. When Brahmaji came to know of the evil intentions of the demon, he appeared and killed the monster with a lotus flower. The three places where the lotus petals fell, turned into lakes – jyeshtha (big), madhyam (medium) and kanishtha (small) Pushkar. Among these, the importance of jyeshtha Pushkar is the most pious. After this, Brahmaji organised a yajna at this place in which all the gods, goddesses and sages were invited. This yajna was performed in the Karthik month.

The tradition of deepdan in Pushkar in Karthik month is very important and puranic. An animal fair is also organized at this time. Foreign tourists also come here in large numbers. People dressed in colourful clothes, sadhus dressed in saffron, thousands of cattle and decorated camels, adorned with all these, Pushkar fair offers a very attractive and vibrant scene.

Jeenmata Fair

The Jeenmata (goddess of power) temple is situated at the foothills in Rewasa village of Sikar district. This temple was built in 1121 Vikram Samvat by Hathar of Mohil. The eight-handed (ashtabhuji) statue of Mother goddess is installed here. In front of it, two lamps, one lit in ghee and the other in oil have continuously been burning for hundreds of years. It is believed that the tradition of lighting these lamps was started by the Chauhan kings of Delhi.

There is a folktale that Harsha and Jeena were brother and sister. Their parents died in their childhood. Unhappy with her sister-in-law's (Bhabhi) behaviour, Jeen left her brother's house and came to the hills of Rewas. When Harsha came to know about this, he requested Jeen to return home. When Jeen was not ready to come home in any way, then Harsha also started doing penance to please the goddess. Finally, the goddess appeared, and, according to popular belief, stays there till today. Apart from Rajasthan, lakhs of pilgrims from other states also come here for the fulfilment of their wishes. During Navratras, in the months of Chaitra and Ashwin,

people gather here in large numbers.

Khatu Shyamji Fair

The temple of Khatu Shyamji, located in Sikar district is very famous. This temple of Shri Shyamji, a form of Shri Krishna, located about 50 kms from district headquarters, is crowded with devotees throughout the year. An annual fair is held from the tenth day of Shukla Paksha of Phalgun to Dwadashi in the temple of Shree Shyamji, famous by the name sheesh ke dani. Shyam garden and Shyam kund located near this temple are also worth visiting.

Bhartrhari Fair

Lakhi fair is held twice a year in Vaishakha and Bhadrapada at a place called Bhartrhari, 40 kms from Alwar. Hundreds of babas (saints) with kamandal (water-vessel) and tongs in hands, whole body smeared with ashes, long hair and beard make this place come alive as mini Kumbh. It is believed that Gopichand Bhartrhari was a great king. His wife Rani Pingla was extremely beautiful. For some reason, when the king got discontented, he renounced his kingship and took renunciation. Bhartrhari liked this forest very much and he remained there till his death. His samadhi is also situated there.

Diggi Kalyanji Fair

A fair on the Amavasya of Shravan month is held at Diggipuri, Malpura tehsil of Tonk district, about 75 kms from Jaipur. Lord Kalyanji, the deity of Diggipuri is a form of lord Vishnu.

There is a public belief about Diggi that Indra, angered by Apsara Urvashi of his court, sentenced her to stay on earth (mrityulok) for twelve years. Urvashi started living on earth. Here, she used to walk as a mare in the night in the garden of the king of Chandragiri. The angry king of Chandragiri chased the mare one night and captured it. The mare took the form of a beautiful lady. The king was fascinated by Urvashi and was eager to bring her to his palace. Urvashi kept a condition that he will have to save her when Indra comes to pick her up at the end of the sentence. If he is unable to do so, she will curse him. At the end of punishment, Indra came to mrityulok to take back Urvashi. Indra defeated Digva with the help of Lord Vishnu and took Urvashi back. Urvashi cursed the king to become a leper. Lord Vishnu took pity on king Digva and said to the king that after some time one of his idols will come flowing in the nearby sea, and by seeing the idol the king's disease will be cured. Later, that idol came and the king was cured with the mere sight of it. Since lord Vishnu cured king Digva of leprosy, this temple was named Kalyan mandir.

Shri Mahavirji Fair

This fair is organised from Chaitra Shukla Trayodashi to Vaishakh Krishna Pratipada every year in memory of Mahavir Swami at Chandanpur village (Shri Mahavirji) situated on the banks of Gambhir river in Hindaun tehsil of Karauli district. This is the largest fair of the Jains. It is believed that a tanner named Kirpadas used to graze his animals on a mound. Presently this mound is known by his name. Once, one of his cows did not give milk for several days. He followed that cow to find out the reason, he saw that the cow was spilling its milk on a mound. On digging the mound, he found a grand statue of deep red colour. Kirpadas placed the statue in a hut. Jain Amarchand Bilala of Baswa first recognized this statue of Mahavir ji and donated a large amount to build a temple.

Even today, when the fair starts, the first ritual before the chariot journey is to get the chariot touched by the hands of descendants of that tanner. This fair of Shri Mahavirji is unique in itself and an unparalleled event of all religions.

Karni Mata Fair

The temple of Kuldevi Karni Mata of Rathore rulers of Bikaner is situated in Deshnok, Nokha tehsil, Bikaner district. It is known as the Temple of rats. Here the rats roam freely without fear of the people. Fairs are held here every year during Navratris of Chaitra and Ashtami.

Sheetla Mata Fair

Sheetla Mata Fair is celebrated on Chaitra Krishna Saptami and Ashtami in Sheel Dungri of Chaksu tehsil in Jaipur district. The temple of Sheetla Mata is situated on a hill, which was built by Maharaj Madhav Singh of Jaipur. Famous as 'bullock cart fair', villagers from far and wide come in their well-decorated bullock carts dressed in colourful clothes. Animal fair is also organised on this occasion.

Sheetla Mata is worshipped as Matrirakshika Devi. The goddess is known as 'Mahamai' in north India, 'Maai Anama' in western India and Sedh, Sheetla and Sedhal mata in Rajasthan. It is believed that the outbreak of smallpox occurs due to the mother's wrath.

Kaila Devi Fair

There is a grand temple of Kaila devi in the valley of Trikuta mountain in Karauli district. A fair is held here on Chaitra Shukla Ashtami. Due to the large number of devotees coming to the fair, it is also called Lakkhi mela. There are two idols in the temple of Kaila Mata. On the right side is the idol of Kaila devi, also known as Lakshmi. On the left is the statue of Chamunda mata. In front of the temple of Kaila devi, there is also a temple of Hanumanji, whom the locals call languria.

According to a folklore, when Kansa put Vasudev and Devaki in prison, Devaki gave birth to a girl. When Kansa wanted to kill that new born girl, she got out of his hand and flew towards the sky. When this Yogamaya descended on earth, the goddess became famous as Kaila Devi.

Kapil Muni Fair

Kapil Muni's fair is held on Kartik Purnima at Kolayat in Bikaner district. According to Skanda Purana, Maharshi Kardan was the son of Brahma. He was married to the daughter of Maharshi Manu, and Kapil muni was born to them. Kapil Muni attained higher level of religious knowledge and started living in the Himalayas. During his journey he saw a distinct place and fascinated by its beauty, a part of his soul stayed there and meditated for the world and the remaining part went to the Himalayas. That oasis later came to be known as Kapilsthan. This place became famous and many devotees started coming here, but the devatas hid this place in desert. Skandadev, son of Shiva-Parvati, rediscovered the place. Taking a bath in this holy lake has immense importance. It is believed that this cuts off the sins of devotees.

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Urs, Ajmer

Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti came to India from Iran in 1192 and spent the rest of his life in Ajmer. Khwaja Saheb, also known as Garib Nawaz, dedicated his entire life in the service of humanity. His tomb in Ajmer is a major centre of faith for Muslims from all over the world. According to the Islamic calendar, the Urs of Khwaja Saheb is celebrated in Ajmer from the first to sixth day in the month of Rajab. It is believed that at the age of ninety-nine, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti felt that the time had come to meet Mahbub-u-Hakiki. When Khwaja Saheb did not come out from the hujre for six days, khadims went inside. There they found that the spirit of Khwaja saheb had left the body. Urs is celebrated every year in memory of him.

During this Urs, pilgrims also offer chadar (holy cloth) at the tomb after doing their prayers. There is a programme of qawwalis in Akbari Masjid and Mahfil-khana built by Akbar. Urs begins with the flag hoisting ceremony at the Buland Darwaza of the Dargah Sharif after sighting the moon. On the sixth day of Rajab, in the ritual of Kul, rose water is splashed on pilgrims. Three days after, on the ninth day, the ritual of the big kul is performed. During Urs, rice is cooked in badi deg and chhoti deg, gifted respectively by Akbar and Jahangir, and prasad is distributed.

This Urs of Khwaja Saheb is perhaps the largest fair of Muslim community in the whole of India, which sets a unique example of harmony amongst all religions.

Galiyakot Urs

There is a tomb of Saint Syed Fakhruddin in the town of Galiyakot in Sagwara tehsil of Dungarpur district. It is the main centre of faith of Dawoodi Bohra sect. It is also called Mazar-e-Fakhri. Mazar Sharif is decorated with flowers and lamps are lit on the occasion of Urs on the 27th day of Muharram. There is a collective prayer and recitation of Quran Sharif.

Beneshwar Fair

Beneshwar fair of Rajasthan is called the 'Kumbh of the tribals'. All the colours of tribal culture are seen in this fair. The fair is held on the occasion of Magha Purnima Shivaratri at a place called Nawatpura of Aspur tehsil, Dungarpur district.

The name Beneshwar is based on the lingam of Lord Shiva. It is believed that this Shivalinga emerged by itself. This Swayambhu Shivlinga is fragmented at five places. The legend says that a cow from Nawatpura village used to come to the Shiva temple every day and anoint the Shivlinga with her milk. One day, the cattleman became upset and followed the cow. When he reached the Shiv temple, he saw the cow anointing the Shivlinga with milk. In an effort to run from there, hoof of the cow struck the Shivlinga and it got fragmented at five places. It is surprising that it is worshiped even after it is fragmented, because the broken statue is generally not worshipped.

Apart from these traditional fairs, National Dussehra fair-Kota, Saras fair (handicrafts), International Kite Festival, Dhulandi Celebration, Elephant Mahotsav, Teej and Gangaur fair, Jaipur literature festival (Literary Utsav)-Jaipur, Abhaneri Utsav-Dausa, Thar festival-Barmer, Camel festival-Bikaner, Maru festival-Jaisalmer, Marwad Utsav-Jodhpur, Ranakpur Utsav, Gorwar fair-Pali, Summer and Autumn festival-Mount Abu, Mewar festival-Udaipur, Mira Mahotsav-Chittorgarh, Matsya Utsav-Alwar, Chandrabhaga fair-Jhalawar also attract a large number of tourists.

Do you know?

Khalkani Mata Donkey fair is held at Bhavgarh Bandhya village near Jaipur. There are no animals other than donkeys and mules in this fair. It is said that the Kachhwahas started this fair 500 years ago to cherish their victory over Chandra Meena.

Exercise

Multiple Choice Questions

1. In which district does Bhartrhari fair takes place ?
(a) Alwar (b) Sikar
(c) Bundi (d) Udaipur
2. In which month is the festival of Kajali Teej celebrated in Bundi ?
(a) Shravana (b) Phalgun
(c) Chaitra (d) Bhadrapad
3. Where is lathhmar Holi played in Rajasthan ?
(a) Shri Mahavirji (b) Salasar
(c) Pushkar (d) Kailadevi
4. Which of the following festivals is not related to Christianity ?
(a) Good Friday (b) Christmas
(c) Easter (d) Navroz

Very Short Answer Questions

1. Match the following :

Fair	Place
1. Kalyanji	Deshnok
2. Kapil muni	Sawai Madhopur
3. Shri Mahavirji	Kolayat
4. Karni Mata	Diggi
2. Write the names of the three festivals of Muslim community.
3. Which date is considered Abujh Sawa (marriage date on which no auspicious time is required)?
4. Which is the biggest fair of Rajasthan's tribal society?
5. In which district of Rajasthan is the Jeen mata temple located?
6. Which temple is famous as the temple of rats?
7. Khatu Shyamji is considered to be a form of which god?

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Describe the Kalyanji fair of Diggi.
2. Write a note on the nature of Holi held in different parts of Rajasthan.
3. 'Teej tyohar baori, le doobi Gangaur'. Explain this line.
4. Write a brief note on the Urs of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti.

Essay Type Questions

1. Write an article on the four major fairs of Rajasthan.
2. Describe the two major fairs of Sikar district.
3. Write a detailed commentary on the celebration of Gangaur.

Project work :

1. Attend a fair near you and prepare an article on it.

Imagine :

1. You are on a visit to Ajmer, what are the major religious places you will visit there ?