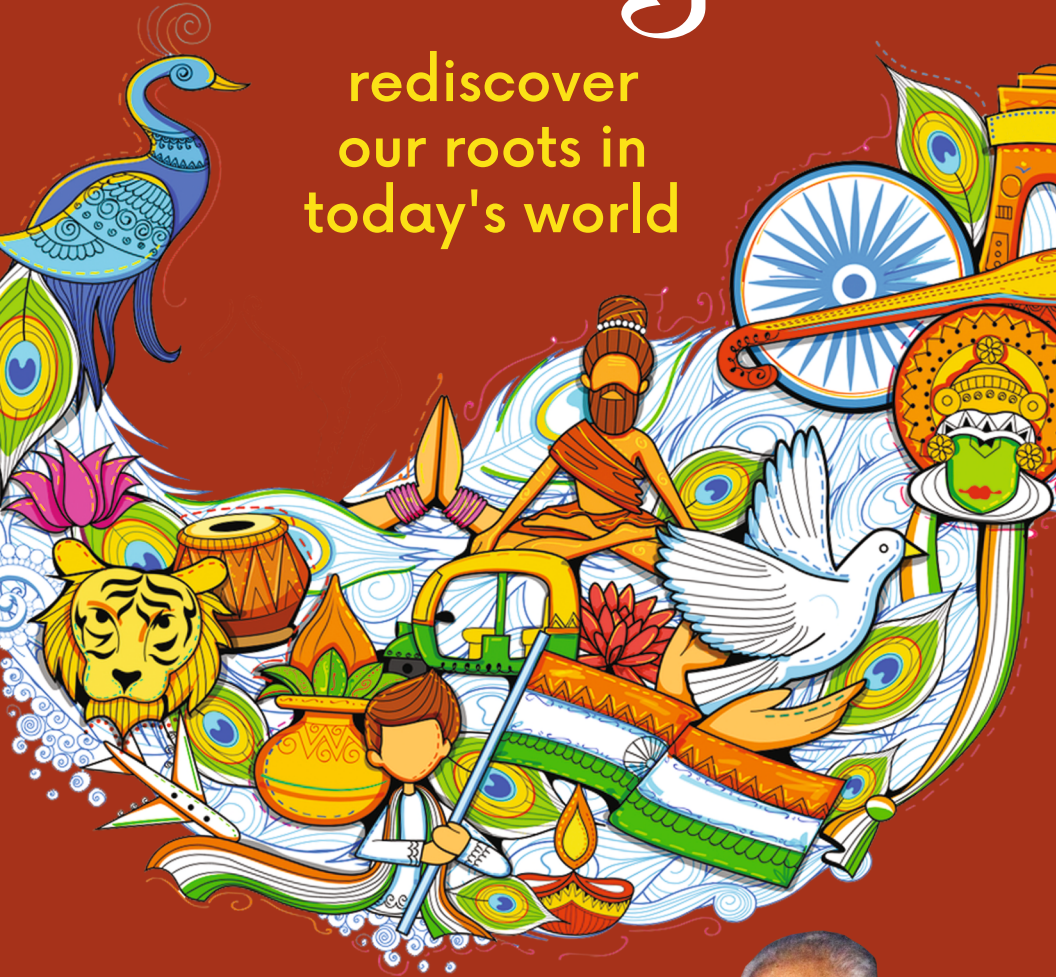


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rediscover
our roots in
today's world

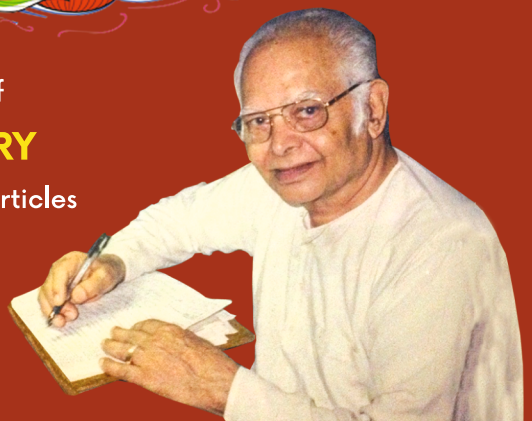


Celebrating the Ink and Insights of

SHRI RAJAN CHOWDHRY

A compilation of his handpicked articles

(Now in English)



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(Now in English)

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Disclaimer:

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This book is dedicated to

Late Shri Rajan Chowdhry

on his

100th Birth Anniversary

(on 24th Jan 2024)

by

his children-their spouses, and grandchildren

Rohit - Preeti R Chowdhry, Aasheesh.

Vandana - Yatendra Waghay, Shefali, Vivek.

Rajeev - Sonal Chowdhry, Rupali, Arjun.

We miss our mother/grandmother on this occasion

- Dr (Mrs) Gayatri R Chowdhry

(MBBS, Retired Director - AP Forensic Science Laboratory)

who passed away on 20th May 2023.

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FOREWORD

In the diverse landscape of Bharatiya literature, the works of Late Shri Rajan Chowdhry stand as a testament to both the wisdom of our past and the promise of our future. These selected articles, originally penned in Hindi by Shri Rajan Chowdhry, have been thoughtfully translated to English by Mrs. Sadhana Rastogi, preserving the essence of his profound insights and unwavering passion for Bharatiya history, culture, traditions, patriotism, and the need for transformation. Our sincere gratitude to her for this effort.

The process of bringing these articles to a wider audience is our labour of love, commemorating Shri Rajan Chowdhry's 100th birth anniversary. We have meticulously edited and presented these pieces with the utmost care and reverence. We have also included at the end of each article a "Key message", which is our interpretation of the article; you may in fact find more golden nuggets out there.

As you delve into these pages, you embark on a journey through time and tradition, guided by the keen intellect and unwavering dedication of Shri Rajan Chowdhry. His words are not merely reflections of a bygone era; they are beacons of light that illuminate the path towards a brighter future.

Shri Rajan Chowdhry was born in Nehtaur, Uttar Pradesh, on 24th January 1924. He studied in Lucknow, lived his early years in Bijnor (UP). He truly believed in the future of the country being in the hands of youth and he shared his knowledge, views and ideas with youngsters and also helped elders gain more clarity on topics such as Bharatiya history, culture, traditions, rituals, festivals, Hindi language. He worked for several years in Mumbai in St Andrews School and Bombay International School. He moved to Hyderabad in 1979, worked in Nasr School for several years.

Over the years he authored more than 300 thought-provoking articles that were published in Hindi newspapers and magazines. He published

a book called 'Topictionary', English to Hindi, topic-wise dictionary, to help children improve their Hindi vocabulary. He also scripted and directed many one-act plays and has given talks on All India Radio. He continued in his pursuit to share his knowledge by writing articles even at the age of 90. He passed away on 24th June 2015 when he was 91.

This compilation of 33 selected articles covers many topics, from the rich panorama of Bharatiya festivals to the crucial role of education in shaping the youth of our nation. These articles are not confined to mere words on a page; they are a call to action, a plea for introspection, and a testament to the enduring strength of our culture and heritage. In a world marked by rapid change, these articles are a timeless reminder of the importance of preserving our cultural heritage and fostering the transformative change that our society so urgently needs. May these articles inspire you, as they have inspired countless others, to embrace the rich heritage of our history, culture, and traditions while actively participating in the evolution and progress of our great nation.

- With best wishes and warm regards
from Shri Rajan Chowdhry's children - their spouses
and grandchildren.

About Shri Rajan Chowdhry:

A Life dedicated to Education and Literature.

Shri Rajan Chowdhry, a man of multifaceted talents, stands as a beacon of wisdom and dedication in the realm of education, journalism, literature, and social service. Born on January 24, 1924, in the quaint town of Nehtour near Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, his life's journey has been a remarkable one, marked by an unwavering commitment to learning and contributing to society.

Educational Pursuits:

Rajan Chowdhry's academic journey was marked by a thirst for knowledge and a dedication to excellence. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree, followed by a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) qualification. His quest for wisdom led him to delve into the realms of philosophy, earning him the title of Siddhant Shastri. Furthermore, his pursuit of knowledge knew no bounds, as he ventured into the study of art with the Royal Drawing Society London, where he excelled with honours.

Teaching Endeavours:

With a strong foundation in education, Rajan Chowdhry embarked on a teaching career that left an indelible mark on the lives of countless students. He felt obligated to share his knowledge to get rid of the Rishi Rin – debt towards Teachers for the knowledge received, fulfilled by sharing knowledge with others. His teaching stints included Raja Jwala Prasad College in Bijnor (1952-55), Saint Andrews School in Mumbai (1961-64), Bombay International School (1965-79), and Nasr School in Hyderabad (1980-92). His influence as an educator

extended far beyond the classroom, shaping the minds and values of generations.

Contributions to Hindi Consultation:

Rajan Chowdhry's creative spirit found expression not only in the field of education but also in the domain of advertising. To propagate grammatically right and error free Hindi in advertisements and other translated material, he offered complimentary Hindi Consultation Services to organizations in Mumbai and Hyderabad.

His Literary Odyssey, a Resonance of Culture:

In his literary endeavours, Rajan Chowdhry delved into a rich tapestry of themes, weaving together the threads of Indian history, heritage, and culture. He beckoned readers to uncover the profound layers concealed within, emphasizing the fusion of cultural enlightenment with the modern world. His quill unearthed the scientific and logical roots beneath our heritage, rituals, and festivals, igniting a deeper appreciation. With fervour, he championed the cultivation of national pride, scrutinizing the colonial shadows cast upon our collective consciousness. The Hindi language, a cultural gem, found a tireless ambassador. His words sparked critical thinking and challenged conformity, nurturing intellectual independence.

Notable Literary Works:

Rajan Chowdhry commenced his writing journey in the 1940s, and his role as an editor for the monthly edition of "Ugate Sitare" magazine, dailies "Bharat" and "Leader" in Allahabad, marked the beginning of a prolific literary career. He translated stories that found a home in the popular magazine "Madhuri". Over 300 of his writings, spanning articles, memoirs, book reviews, reports, essays, stories, short stories, and plays, graced the pages of several leading newspapers and magazines. His literary contributions covered diverse topics, including a biographical account series of the martyr Alluri Sitaramraju in 18 parts, an extensive coverage titled "Janpad Bijnor: What it was, What it is, and What it can be", and explorations of Hyderabad's culture. His writings also delved into his experiences from his stay in America, offering readers insights into diverse cultures and practices.

Broadcasting and Cultural Contributions:

Beyond the written word, Rajan Chowdhry made his presence felt through various media. He engaged in a discussion with the renowned writer Shri Kamleshwarji on Mumbai Doordarshan TV, exploring the topic of "Hindi Ka Haal Behal." His thoughts on the education system found a platform on Mumbai Aakashwaani Radio with a broadcast on "Nalanda-Takshshila Shiksha Pranali" (Education System). Notably, he even collaborated with Nasr School students to craft and present a self-written play "Ishtehar (Advertisement)" on Hyderabad's Aakashwaani Radio in 1982.

Philosophy and Approach:

Throughout his life, Rajan Chowdhry remained committed to his guiding principles. He believed in presenting his feelings and reflections in a simple, engaging, and aesthetic manner, aligning them with modern perspectives. His philosophy could be summarized in the phrase, "Riti-Niti purani, Nazar nayi," signifying reverence for old traditions combined with fresh insights. His inspirations stemmed from Vedic philosophy, Bharatiya culture, ancient history, and an unwavering sense of patriotism.

Post-Retirement Dedication:

Even after retirement, Rajan Chowdhry continued to serve the realms of literature and social service in Hyderabad. His notable contribution came in form of the "Topictionary" book, published in 2001, featuring a vast and valuable collection of words from 150 significant topics translated from English to Hindi. This book, which proved beneficial to both teachers and students in improving their Hindi vocabulary, saw a second edition in 2012. On the social side, he was instrumental in forming the Tyagi Samaj in Hyderabad-Secunderabad, contributing in helping set up the association and advising the governance. He continued to be actively involved in the society along with his wife Dr Gayatri R Chowdhry (retired Director, AP Forensic Science Laboratory) and his children Rohit, Vandana and Rajeev who are all settled in their careers and life.

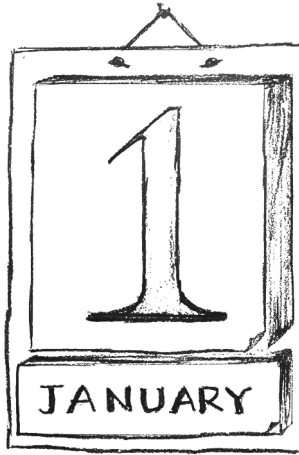
Awards and Accolades:

Rajan Chowdhry's literary and educational endeavours did not go unnoticed. He received numerous awards and recognitions, including the Mumbai Vidhyapeeth Award in 1969, the Mumbai Jubilerian Teachers Award in 1978, and the Prominent Teacher's Award in 1990 at Nasr School. His commitment to education and cultural enrichment earned him the prestigious "Vidya Martand" award in 2004 from the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, Hyderabad.

In celebrating the life and contributions of Shri Rajan Chowdhry, we honour not only a remarkable teacher, writer, and social worker but also a true guardian of Bharatiya culture, history, and traditions. His legacy continues to inspire generations, serving as a testament to the enduring impact of a life dedicated to education and literature.



Selected Articles
written by
Shri Rajan Chowdhry



1

New Year's Dilemma: Culture's Echo or Convenience's Whisper

Gopal: "Hey there, friend! Did you notice the festivities last night on December 31st? The church bells were ringing, devotees gathered for prayers, and the younger crowd was setting off fireworks. So, I thought, why not join in and celebrate the New Year?"

Ravi: "Dear friend, it's perfectly fine to celebrate the New Year, but we should reflect on whether this New Year truly resonates with our culture or if it's merely an imported concept from the West."

Gopal: "Well, everyone seems to be celebrating it. When so many people believe in something, can it really be wrong?"

Ravi: "Shouldn't we question the herd mentality when it comes to rituals? Have you ever considered that the British ruled our country for 200 years and introduced several customs that we continue to follow today? We might have gained 'Swaraj' (Independence), but 'Suraaj' (Good Governance) remains a distant dream."

Ravi: "Our government may have adopted the 'Shak Samvat,' but in reality, we practice the English New Year because of convenience."

Gopal: "Any task becomes easier with regular practice, doesn't it?"

Ravi: "While we've adopted English clothing, language, food habits, lifestyles, and rituals, we must not forget our rich Indian culture and heritage."

Gopal: "That's true, but our country celebrates various New Years in different regions. It can be quite challenging to accommodate this diversity."

Ravi: "Absolutely, but India thrives on its unity in diversity. There's a crucial need to educate people about our Indian culture and values. This calls for a revolution in our thought process. We mustn't lose touch with our fundamental Indian Principles and Value System. We've even forgotten our 'Samvatsar.'"

Gopal: "Could you explain what 'Samvatsar' is?"

Ravi: "It marks the beginning of the universe, specifically 'Chaitra Shukla Pratipad.' It's believed that God created the universe 100,97,39,49,108 years ago." (About 101 billion years ago.)

Gopal: "How do you remember such a vast number!"

Ravi: "On that same day, King Vikramaditya established the Chakravarty Kingdom 2071 years ago. Currently, we're in Vikram Samvat 2071, which predates the English BC calendar by 57 years. (This article was written in the year 2014). It's the day when King Shalivahan defeated the 'Hoon Dynasty' and established his kingdom. Lord Ram was coronated in Ayodhya on this day. Guru Angad Dev and Sindhi Saint Jhule Lal share the same birthdate. Swami Dayanand founded Aryasamaj on this very day."

Ravi: "This day symbolizes the beginning of spring, spreading fragrance, joy, and enthusiasm. It's a time for new crops and a fresh start. Can January 1st bring the same happiness and self-esteem to our nation? Without a sense of nationalism and self-esteem, we can't truly feel greatness."

Gopal: "You seem a bit upset, but your insights are enlightening. Which Samvat do you follow? I'd like to follow the same and encourage my friends."

Ravi: "This is about a revolution of thought. I prefer 'Vikram Samvat.' Let's use it and get an Indian Calendar called 'Panchang' to popularize Vikram Samvat. Our great Saints and Thinkers devised

Indian 'Samvatsar' through moral and ethical thinking and research. They broke down time into smaller units like 'Pal' and 'Vipal,' dividing 24 hours into 17,49,60,00,000 'Trutis.' They crafted a year of 365 days, 1 hour, 48 minutes, and 46 seconds, more precise than other calendars. They also defined Months, Adhik (extra) Months, Paksh (half-months), Dates, and Vaars (days of the week). Many cultures, including Babylon and Yunan, followed similar calendars, and India alone boasts descriptions of 25 Samvat."

"My dear friend, commercial advertising media promoted the English Year. Industries capitalize on this time by selling greeting cards, diaries, and calendars. Hotels, pubs, bars, and restaurants also see a boost."

"So, my dear friend, you must decide whether to tread the well-worn path or join the thought revolution. We must inspire people to cherish our country and its wisdom. As Gandhiji once said, 'I don't hate English, but I hate English-attitude.' Now, it's your choice whether to celebrate the imported English New Year or our own Indian New Year."

Gopal: "My dear friend, I'll be celebrating Vikram Samvat, the Indian New Year, and I'll encourage my friends to do the same. I'm truly grateful for your wisdom. Thank you so much. Let's meet again to explore other topics."

Ravi: "Absolutely, my dear friend. I'm confident that you'll succeed in your mission. Stay sensible and happy."

Key message:

Gopal and Ravi engage in a thought-provoking conversation about celebrating the New Year. While Gopal is eager to join the festivities, Ravi encourages reflection on the cultural significance of the New Year. They discuss the impact of colonialism on Indian customs and the need to preserve their rich heritage. Ravi introduces the concept of 'Samvatsar,' marking the beginning of the universe, and shares its historical and cultural importance. They contemplate the essence of nationalism and self-esteem in celebrating New Year. Despite differences in perspective, they part with a shared commitment to celebrate Vikram Samvat and promote Indian traditions.

2

Roots and Revelry: A New Year Saga

As the world welcomes the Gregorian New Year with festivities, parties, and fireworks, I find myself in a unique position as an Indian who embraces our nationally recognized 'Shak Samvat.' The enthusiasm and fervour seen during Western New Year celebrations can sometimes appear unnatural or awkward to me, and this stark cultural contrast raises important questions about the preservation of our Indian cultural heritage and the growing influence of Western customs.

In various parts of our diverse nation, we celebrate 'Chaitra Shukla Pratipada, Baisakhi, Gudi Padva, Ugadi, Onam, Vikrami, Shalivahan, Hijri,' and more, according to the Panchang calendar. Each celebration is marked by its distinct local language and customs, reminding me of the rich diversity of traditions that make up our Indian culture. However, it's disheartening to witness that those of us who choose to follow the Indian National Calendar and its associated festivals are sometimes labelled as conservative or backward.

In today's rapidly changing world, a significant number of modern individuals prefer to embrace Western-style celebrations, often choosing to ring in the New Year at restaurants, eateries, and pubs. What's more, magazines that are often regarded as progressive release special issues and editions to mark the Gregorian New Year, emphasizing the pervasive influence of Western celebrations in India. Even our Municipal Corporations have joined in on the festivities,

adorning the main parts of our cities with dazzling lights. What is particularly surprising is that even government institutions such as Akashwani and Doordarshan enthusiastically welcome the English New Year with special programs. Some of these programs have, unfortunately, stirred controversy. I vividly recall a certain channel's portrayal of Lord Shri Krishna, one of his wives, Satyabhama, and Saint Narad, all performing a disco dance. This portrayal of Hindu Mythology not only tested the patience of Hindus but also raised critical questions about the boundaries of cultural respect. I couldn't help but wonder how different the reaction might have been if this treatment were applied to other religions.

In the midst of this evolving cultural landscape, it's essential to reflect on the direction India is heading. Promises of fostering harmony among diverse communities are often made by political leaders, but all too frequently, these commitments are conveniently forgotten. It's not just our political leaders; even the public appears to have lost some of its collective power to hold leaders accountable for unfulfilled promises. This situation eerily reminds me of the story of the monkey and two cats, where the monkey sowed division among the cats to benefit itself.

Moreover, our education system, a legacy left by the colonial rulers, was designed to produce clerks rather than critical thinkers and innovators. Sadly, this trend continued even after our hard-fought freedom, perpetuating a culture of imitation rather than innovation.

Another matter that has troubled me is the attire worn by news broadcasters. While female anchors often gracefully embrace the elegance of Indian sarees, their male counterparts frequently opt for the formality of Western suits when reading the news. I recall a time when both male and female news anchors donned Indian attire for a while, but that changed when the channel's director did. This shift has left viewers, especially those in far-off locations and small villages, puzzled about what truly represents our national dress. The attire choices of our Prime Minister and President starkly contrast with those of male news anchors, underscoring the need to rekindle pride in Indian attire and products influenced by Swadeshi (Indian) culture.

I can't help but hope for the day when my fellow Indians will fully embrace and celebrate our culture in their day-to-day lives. I long for the recognition of the rich heritage that lies within us, and the

reclamation of our cultural identity in the face of Western influence. It's a call for preserving the 'aan, baan, shaan' (pride & glory) of our Indian culture and traditions, a call to truly live an Indian cultural life every day.

Key message:

Amidst global New Year celebrations, the author reflects on the cultural clash between Western-style festivities and traditional Indian customs. The author discusses the influence of Western practices on India's New Year celebrations, from the adoption of the Gregorian calendar to the commercialization of the holiday. He highlights the importance of preserving Indian cultural heritage and identity in the face of Western influence. The author calls for a reconnection with traditional values and customs and a deeper appreciation for India's rich cultural diversity.



3

Makar Sankranti: A Cultural Sunrise in Modern Times

As a country deeply rooted in agriculture, our festivals have always been intimately tied to the cycles of the harvest. For farmers, the readiness of their crops is a cause for celebration, a moment of profound joy and gratitude toward the divine. If, by any stroke of bad luck, the harvest is disappointing, they patiently await a better time, harbouring no bitterness. However, in the sprawling cities and metros, the sight of vast green fields and bountiful sheds filled with agricultural treasures is a rarity. Here, the connection between festivals and the rigors of farming is often lost, replaced by a focus on materialism, ostentation, cut-throat competitions, and frivolous entertainment.

This shift is a matter of grave concern. Its adverse long-term effects are already evident as our cultural foundations erode, and our rich heritage becomes unfamiliar terrain for our children. In this scenario, I find myself pondering a critical question: when will we awaken to the profound scientific and cultural significance of our traditions? Can we, in this new millennium, reconnect with our roots and uphold our values? In the present era, we frequently hear prophecies from sages,

researchers, and ancient scholars like Rishis. Drawing from their studies, which encompass zodiac signs, month-days, and seconds, these revered figures calculated the chronology of various ages and crafted our indigenous Panchang (calendar). Yet, during the colonial rule, they imposed their English calendar, language, and customs on us. It's often said that in their vast empire, the sun never set, and while our leaders did eventually secure political freedom, we continue to grapple with the pursuit of economic, cultural, and educational freedom. Challenges such as illiteracy, superstitions, caste divisions, and religious tensions persist, not to mention the pressing need for population control.

To progress as a nation, we must recognize our unique identity and take a scientific approach to our challenges. It is during Makar Sankranti that we find a perfect opportunity to embark on this journey.

The very term "Makar Sankranti" encapsulates its profound significance. The sun, our primary source of energy and light, orchestrates the cycle of day and night, shaping our weather and seasons as the Earth orbits around it. Geographers have delineated the Earth's map with lines of latitude and longitude, with the Equator separating the northern and southern hemispheres. South of the Equator lies the Makar rekha (Tropic of Capricorn) in the southern hemisphere, while the Kark rekha is to the north. On the specific day of Makar Sankranti, the sun's radiant energy aligns precisely with the Makar rekha. The day marks the upward movement of the sun away from the southern hemisphere towards the northern hemisphere.

In this new millennium, Makar Sankranti falls on the 14th or 15th of January. This period holds immense religious significance. According to our history and heritage, the majority of our gods and goddesses were incarnated in this phase. Following this auspicious day, the duration of daylight steadily increases, and the weather begins to warm.

This transition presents a golden opportunity to enhance our eyesight and knowledge. Our ancestors wisely advised us to behold the rising sun. To this end, they recommended an early morning bath, the performance of Surya Namaskar (sun salutations), offering water to the Sun God, and marvelling at the birds soaring eastward—a daily ritual rich in scientific reasoning. Even kite flying, a cherished tradition among young children, contributes to improved eyesight, a testament

to the wisdom of our forebears. These rituals, now considered daily routines, are firmly rooted in scientific principles.

Makar Sankranti is celebrated across the country, each region embracing its own customs and nomenclature. In Andhra Pradesh, the festival is welcomed with chants of "Govimale Govimale," spanning three days of rituals, including sacred baths, sunrise observation, Surya Namaskar, and the offering of toys to children. Cow dung coatings in courtyards and colourful 'Muggu' designs (made from lime, vermilion and turmeric - a natural antiseptic) add to the festivities. This practice serves as protection against insect infestations. Comparable celebrations unfold in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu during 'Pongal,' while Maharashtra observes 'Tilgud' with the chant "Til Gud kha and Goud-Goud bola." Punjab marks it as 'Lohri,' and Assam calls it "Maandhra Bihu." Regrettably, in the bustling metropolises, faith in the scientific essence of these festivals is waning, taking a toll on both physical and mental health.

Certain changes are beginning to surface in urban settings. Under the influence of China's kite-flying culture, the shapes and sizes of kites in big cities have evolved, elevating aesthetics over the sun's benefits. Emphasis now gravitates toward kite-flying accessories such as 'Maanjha' (the thread), 'Charkhi' (the wooden roller), and kite design. Unfortunately, competitions increasingly focus on these aspects rather than the healthful qualities of kite-flying. The use of nylon/synthetic material instead of cotton thread and non-biodegradable plastic instead of paper are leading to environmental problems. The once-thrilling contest between underprivileged children, who risked their lives to capture kites cut by others, has also transformed. Over time, urban expansion and population growth have encroached upon open fields, forcing people to fly kites on roads, narrow lanes, and terraces. This change has exacerbated safety risks. Kite-flying at night under floodlights, accompanied by blaring film songs and the consumption of health-deteriorating aerated drinks and beverages further diminishes the tradition's connection with sunlight. The hospitals bear witness to countless reports of accidents year after year. Unfortunately, lessons from these mishaps remain elusive, with accidents on the rise. The situation is dire, yet not beyond repair.

If parents, guardians, teachers, writers, journalists, leaders, administrators, and the media can recognize the importance and

scientific essence of our festivals and their rituals, they can educate and inspire the younger generation to take pride in these traditions. This can usher in a transformation, leading to significant improvements. By instilling these values from infancy, we can ignite an intellectual revolution, fostering moral and social upliftment. Such a resurgence can propel our nation toward progress, reaffirming India's esteemed place on the global stage, as it once was.

Key message:

The article explores the cultural significance of Makar Sankranti rooted in agricultural celebrations. It highlights the growing urban-rural disconnect, with traditional festivities fading in cities. The author stresses the need to preserve culture while adapting to modernity, citing the scientific basis for rituals like sun-watching and kite-flying. He urges leaders and educators to revive these traditions for a cultural and intellectual renaissance. Ultimately, the article calls for a return to India's roots for national progress and recognition on this only solar festival.

4

Bharat: The Soulful Name of India

For centuries, the land we now call India has been known by a name bestowed upon it by foreigners. However, our nation's true name is 'Bharat,' a name rooted in rich history. The name 'India' has its origins in the mispronunciation of 'Sindhu' by Alexander the Great during the 4th century B.C. Fortunately, this misnomer did not gain widespread acceptance. The term 'Hindu' emerged when traders from Arab, Iran, and Turkey arrived in Karachi and struggled to pronounce 'Sindhu.' They eventually referred to the people and region around the river as 'Hindu' and the language spoken as 'Hindi.' To this day, those living near the Sindhu river call themselves Sindhis, and their language is Sindhi.

In the 6th century, during the reign of King Nausher Khan, a significant linguistic event took place. King Nausher Khan, upon learning about the Sanskrit book 'Panchtantra,' commissioned a local Sanskrit scholar named Hakim Bajrolya to translate it into Arabic. In the book's preface, Minister Hameer stated that the book, known as 'Zaban-e-Hind,' was translated from Sanskrit. Later, during the colonial era, the names 'Indus' and 'Hindu' gained popularity, and these distorted names continue to be used today, perpetuating the mistakes of colonial rule.

The truth is that our country's original name was 'Aryavart,' signifying a land where only Aryas, individuals with the highest qualities in body, soul, intellect, and character, resided. The name 'Bharat' has two

prominent origin stories. According to Jain scholars, it traces back to the son Bharat of Saint Hrishabh-Dev. In the second narrative, it is attributed to the wise and renowned son Bharat of King Dushyant and Queen Shakuntala. Upon ascending the throne, Bharat was urged by his people to change the country's name from 'Aryavart' to 'Bharat Varsh.'

'Bha' in 'Bharat' symbolizes knowledge, while 'rat' signifies continuous engagement, portraying a nation perpetually in pursuit of knowledge. It is a profound and meaningful name that we should take pride in. We must showcase this characteristic of our people to the world.

In his historic speech on the night of August 14, 1947, our first Prime Minister, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, proclaimed, "At the stroke of midnight, when the world sleeps, India awakes." Even in our constitution, it is written, "India that is Bharat." However, despite seven decades of independence, the rectification of this name has not occurred. 'India' is still commonly used to refer to our nation, both within our country and globally. Likewise, words like 'Hindustan,' 'Hindu,' and 'Hindi,' bestowed upon us by foreign influences, continue to be in common usage. This reflects our ignorance of our rich culture, heritage, traditions, and history—a source of shame and regret. It remains uncertain when we will awaken to this truth and recognize the need to embrace and practice our rich traditions and culture.

In a world where identity and heritage matter deeply, it is essential that we acknowledge our true name, 'Bharat,' and honour the legacy it carries. We must strive to shed the colonial vestiges that still persist in our language and identity. Embracing 'Bharat' as our name is not just a matter of semantics; it is a reaffirmation of our roots, a celebration of our cultural diversity, and a step towards reclaiming our authentic identity.

The journey of rediscovering 'Bharat' begins with acknowledging our history and the significance of our name. It involves educating ourselves and others about the origins and meanings of our names and shedding the misconceptions that have clouded our understanding for centuries. It requires a collective effort to replace distorted names with accurate ones in official and everyday usage.

We must celebrate the depth and diversity of our heritage, which spans thousands of years and encompasses a multitude of languages,

cultures, and traditions. 'Bharat' is a name that transcends linguistic and regional boundaries, uniting us in a common identity. It is a name that encapsulates the timeless wisdom of our sages and the profound philosophy of our scriptures.

As we move forward, let us embrace 'Bharat' as our true name and symbolize our commitment to preserving our cultural heritage, upholding our values, and cherishing the legacy of our ancestors. The name 'Bharat' carries with it the essence of our identity, the spirit of our people, and the promise of a brighter future rooted in our rich traditions.

It is time to cast aside the misnomers of the past and proudly declare, "I am from Bharat." In doing so, we honour our history, respect our diversity, and pave the way for a more authentic and culturally enriched future. 'Bharat' is not just a name; it is a reflection of our heritage and a testament to our enduring spirit.

Key message:

This article emphasizes the importance of acknowledging our country as 'Bharat,' its original name, rather than 'India,' a foreign designation. 'Bha' represents knowledge, while 'rat' signifies working continuously, implying a nation that is continually in pursuit of knowledge. It traces the historical origins of these names and laments the continued usage of 'India' and related terms like 'Hindustan,' 'Hindu,' and 'Hindi.' The author emphasizes the need for a cultural awakening and national pride in embracing 'Bharat' as a meaningful name symbolizing continuous pursuit of knowledge and culture. The article calls for correcting this historical oversight and fostering a deeper connection with our rich traditions and heritage.

Note: In the following articles, you will notice the use of "Bharat" (the name of our nation) and "Bharatiya" (substituting for the term Indian / India's).



5

Holi and the Changing Colours of Celebration

Festivals hold a significant place in Bharatiya culture, symbolizing the knots that bind our lives, like birthdays. However, over time, some festivals have taken on a less savoury form, reflecting the evolving nature of human life and values. Holi, a popular festival, offers a stark example of this transformation, with urban areas witnessing the most pronounced shifts.

Traditionally, Holi is a farmers' festival, marked by the arrival of spring, moonlit nights, and flourishing crops. The joy is palpable among rural folk who celebrate the season's bounty, singing folk songs, playing traditional instruments, and lighting bonfires. The act of roasting fresh, unharvested beans and pulses in the Holika-Dahan fire is a symbol of

this joy, offering a sense of communal celebration and anticipation of prosperity.

However, urban Holi celebrations paint a different picture. The growth of businesses and professions in cities has detached many from the natural rhythms of rural life. While technology thrives in urban environments, spirituality and ethics seem to be waning. Economic prosperity coexists with the erosion of traditional values. Religious customs are overshadowed by non-religious practices.

The legend of Holi revolves around the victory of good over evil, tied to the story of Demon King Hiranya Kashyap and his sister Holika's attempt to kill his devout son Prahalad. Holika, immune to fire, sat with Prahalad on her lap in a bonfire, but she was consumed by the flames while Prahalad emerged unscathed. This tale is a celebration of virtue triumphing over vice, marked by the application of Holi fire ashes on foreheads and communal joy.

Yet, in urban areas, the joy of Holi has turned into vulgar revelry. The purity and ethics of the festival have been lost amid abusive behaviour, even in the presence of children and elders. The dream of good prevailing over evil remains distant.

Dulhandi, the day following Holika dahan, is the festival of colours. Previously, natural and aromatic colours, derived from flowers like 'Tesu' (Palash), were used, adding a delightful aroma to the celebration. People would embrace, forget past disputes, and offer sweets. Today, artificial, harmful, and stubborn colours have replaced the natural ones. In urban areas, people apply mud, unpleasant colours, and even substances like coal tar and silver paint, using the occasion to vent their frustrations. Water balloons filled with colours are thrown at unsuspecting passers-by, even unknown individuals on the streets. Doors are banged on, and people are forcibly pulled out of their homes to be covered in colours. Few use dry coloured powder 'Gulal' with decency.

While external appearances are splashed with colour, the inner self remains stained. Holi has been reduced to a display of indecent taste. The joy of the festival is being spoiled rather than savoured, descending into unholy chaos.

Corruption and misconduct plague urban areas, as good judgment takes a back seat. As materialism and Western culture permeate

society, traditional Bharatiya values are side-lined. This phenomenon isn't just happening; it is proliferating, even penetrating smaller towns and villages through media channels.

The responsibility of bringing about change lies with scholars, politicians, the government, journalists, and social reformers. The youth should be nurtured with good values from an early age. We cannot be passive; we must address these issues head-on. Our country may have achieved political freedom, but mental emancipation from the colonial mind-set is still pending. It's time to awaken to the scientific, social, and ethical significance of our ancient festivals and traditions, to truly celebrate and not spoil the fun.

It's time to reclaim our cultural heritage and show our youth the right path. The change starts with thinking seriously and acting consciously.

Key message:

The article delves into the changing dynamics of traditional Bharatiya festivals, with a particular focus on the Holi festival. It highlights how urbanization has transformed the once-pure celebrations into chaotic and often indecent affairs, diverging from their spiritual and ethical roots. The article calls for scholars, politicians, and social reformers to lead the way in reviving traditional values and nurturing the youth with ethical principles. It emphasizes the urgency of recognizing the scientific, social, and ethical aspects of age-old festivals and customs and urges a return to genuine celebration rather than the degradation currently observed.

6

Wardrobe Wisdom: A Conversation on Clothing and Colours

Scene: Dadaji (Grandfather), a wise and elderly man, is sitting in the veranda, engrossed in a book about colours, as the vibrant festival of Holi approaches. His grand-daughter enters, her eyes swollen from crying, wearing a flashy dress.

Grand-daughter: (teary-eyed) Dadaji, look at this dress. Nani sent it for my birthday. Papa asked me to change it.

Dadaji: (calmly) Why are you crying, my dear? Tell me more about it.

Grand-daughter: (sniffles) I thought it looked nice when I saw it in the mirror. But now Papa wants me to wear something else because we're going to see Papa's friend who is not well.

Dadaji: Well, you see, clothes aren't just about how they look in the mirror. There are many factors to consider, like the occasion, venue, and more.

Grand-daughter: (with her friend Neela) Dadaji, can you explain this to us? Neela wants to know too.

Dadaji: Of course, my dear. But let's start with a question. Do you know when clothes were first invented?

Grand-daughter: I'm not sure, Dadaji. Neela, do you know?

Neela: In ancient times, people used bark, leaves, and even animal skins to cover themselves. Cotton came later, and from that, they made clothes.

Dadaji: Excellent! Clothes represent the progress of civilization. In

modern times, people choose clothes considering many factors like age, body type, weather, and traditions.

Neela: (curious) It sounds complicated.

Dadaji: Indeed, there's more. People must consider aesthetics, too. But often, they choose clothing based on trends promoted by films, fashion, and magazines.

Grand-daughter: What about colours? Do they matter?

Dadaji: Colours play a significant role. Black absorbs heat and is worn during winter and is also worn on sad occasions. Blue signifies coolness, red represents heat, yellow and orange symbolize peace, green signifies growth/prosperity, and white reflects simplicity. There's a science to it.

Neela: Can you explain how colours affect personality?

Dadaji: Sure, let's take black, for example. It's known to absorb heat and is often worn during winters. But there's more to consider when choosing colours. We can get a sense of the creative awareness of someone based on the colours they choose, their knowledge of colours and artistic choices.

Grand-daughter: What about my dress the other day, Dadaji? Why did Papa want me to change it?

Dadaji: You were going to see someone who was not well, not celebrating a birthday or going to a party. Your dress was a bit too flashy for that occasion.

Grand-daughter: Why do they make such dresses then? Nani bought it from a fancy store.

Neela: Can I say something, Dadaji?

Dadaji: Of course Neela.

Neela: Clothes producers are commercial people. They make such dresses to attract attention and customers. They're designed for performers, actors, and to make money.

Grand-daughter: But then why do brides wear bright dresses?

Dadaji: Yes, that's common. Generally, dresses meant for special occasions are not worn regularly.

Neela: Why do TV anchors wear suits and ties, even for regional news?

Dadaji: It's a Western influence. In western countries, for example,

people mostly wear T-shirts and jeans daily. Suits and ties are for special occasions. But TV has popularized these choices even in villages.

Grand-daughter: And school uniforms often include ties. Why is that?

Dadaji: School uniforms sometimes adopt western elements due to historical influences, but not all countries follow this practice.

Neela: Why did T-shirts and jeans become popular, Dadaji?

Dadaji: Jeans are durable and originated perhaps with farmers in mind. They're designed for practicality and don't require ironing. They've become popular in our country as well.

Grand-daughter: In our country, even kurta-pajama was considered nightwear. But now, embroidered kurtas are worn casually.

Dadaji: You are right. The Sitar Maestro, Pandit Ravishankarji, also insisted that his foreign disciples wear kurta-pajama for comfort and ease.

Neela: Bharatiya attire like sarees, lehengas, and kurtas are beautiful, but some people dismiss them as old-fashioned.

Grand-daughter: I prefer salwar-kurti, though.

Dadaji: Clothes are meant to cover the body. Yet, the well-to-do sometimes choose to display their body, often following fashion trends without regard for practicality or tradition.

Neela: Are we regressing?

Dadaji: Indeed, some choices reflect trends and commercial interests more than modesty and tradition. Dignity, grace, and decency should guide us.

Grand-daughter: (expressing worry) In the advertising and entertainment industries, some women display their bodies as a strategy to increase product sales.

Neela: (adding) They're labelled as bold, but not all models or actresses do this.

Dadaji: We should practice dignity and respect. Clothing should enhance our personality, not diminish it.

Neela: Dadaji, you've given us valuable insights.

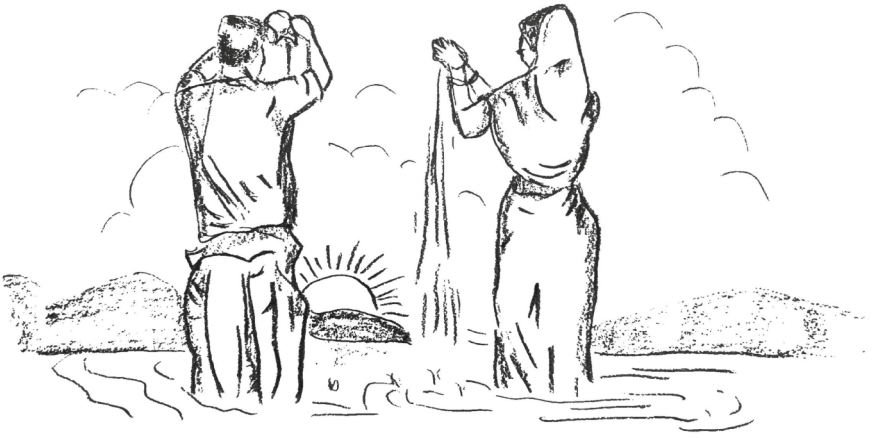
Grand-daughter: Thank you Dadaji, for sharing your wisdom with us.

Dadaji: (blessing them) Dhanyawad my dear children. Come back

anytime for more discussions. Be happy and prosperous in life.

Key message:

In a tranquil setting, a wise grandfather imparts invaluable lessons on clothing choices to his granddaughter and her friend. Through engaging dialogue, they discuss the historical evolution of attire, the impact of colours on personality, and the significance of dressing appropriately for various occasions. They delve into the influence of fashion trends, the importance of preserving traditional clothing, and the need for dignified dressing in contemporary times. This insightful conversation emphasizes the role of clothing in representing culture, values, and personal character, highlighting the importance of mindful sartorial choices. Ultimately, it encourages embracing attire that reflects grace, respect, and tradition.



7

Our New Year and Our Calendar Our Timekeeping Tradition

In many countries around the world, official government and private business dealings are conducted primarily in the country's native language. However, in Bharat, a nation that celebrated its freedom 67 years ago (in 2014), the use of a foreign language, English, persists in both governmental and private sector operations. Although the colonizers have long departed from Bharatiya soil, their English mindset lingers, deeply ingrained in our daily lives. One may wonder when this intellectual revolution will sweep the nation, freeing it from the shackles of colonial thinking and leading to a brighter, more enlightened future.

This linguistic influence of English is not the only relic of colonialism that Bharat grapples with. Another domain where this legacy is visible is in the realm of calendars, particularly the dominance of the Gregorian calendar. The Gregorian calendar, introduced by Pope Gregory in the late 16th century, has become the standard calendar used by the majority of Bharatiya. This calendar originally consisted of only ten months but was later expanded to twelve.

The term "calendar" is derived from the Latin word "Calendarian," which essentially means "accounting." This system of reckoning time was based on the divisions of BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini, Latin for "in the year of the Lord"). Curiously, while Bharat gained its independence in 1947, the Bharatiya government continues to utilize the Gregorian calendar for its official purposes, maintaining a connection to the colonial past.

In Bharat, various calendars, known collectively as Samvatsars, are followed, depending on regional and religious affiliations. Despite this diversity, one of the most widely recognized native calendars is the Vikram Samvat, attributed to the legendary King Vikramaditya. This calendar predates the AD calendar by 56 years. Consequently, the year 2014 AD corresponds to the year 2071 Vikram Samvat, with the transition occurring in March 2014. Various regions across Bharat celebrate their New Year around this time, each festivity reflecting its unique customs and traditions.

For instance, our tradition ushers in the New Year during the Chaitra month on the 15th day of the lunar calendar. This auspicious day coincides with the spring season when the sun's position shifts northward, bathing the land in delightful and invigorating light. Spring, often referred to as the "king of seasons" in Bharat, bestows pleasant weather and bountiful harvests. According to ancient beliefs, this period marks the creation of the world, the birth of mankind, and the emergence of the Vedas, the ancient scriptures of Bharat. It is during this time that the Panchang, or calendar, commences, marking the onset of a new Samvatsar.

An ancient Sanskrit verse captures the significance of this period beautifully:

"Chaitra Mase Jagat Bramha samarj prathamehani
Shukla Pakshe samgantu tada Suryodayenati"

Bharatiya scholars, renowned astrologers, and astronomers alike considered the sun, the principal source of energy, as the foundation for measuring time. The moon, drawing its radiance and energy from the sun, was also incorporated into this system. In certain Bharatiya states, time calculations were even rooted in the lunar phases, particularly the full moon and new moon days. While businesses typically inaugurate their accounting books on Diwali, the festival of

lights, the Bharatiya government's fiscal year kicks off on April 1st, aligning with the Gregorian calendar.

Traditionally, Bharatiya New Year celebrations were marked by a series of rituals aimed at promoting physical and spiritual well-being. Individuals would rise early, take a purifying bath, and engage in Surya Namaskar yoga, a sequence of postures saluting the sun. Another cherished tradition was the preparation and consumption of Panchamrit, or "five divine nectars." This mixture consisted of ingredients such as neem flowers, raw mango, tamarind, jaggery, salt, and chironji (a small dry fruit). Panchamrit was believed to cool the body, cleanse the blood, and rejuvenate the spirit, preparing individuals for the year ahead.

In addition to calendars and celebrations, the concept of time in Bharat extends far beyond mere chronology. Bharatiya scholars and philosophers have meticulously divided time into four Yugas, or Ages, each characterized by distinct attributes. Kalyug, the current age, is estimated to span 432,000 years, with Treta Yuga, Dwapar Yuga, and Satyug successively doubling, tripling, and quadrupling that duration. The first day of the Bharatiya week is dedicated to the sun, aptly named "Ravi-var," while the second day honours the moon, "Som-var." Bharat's system of time division operates at an extraordinarily granular level.

The concept of time's power, for better or worse, is deeply ingrained in Bharatiya philosophy. Time, it is believed, cannot be controlled or altered; it marches forward with relentless determination. Therefore, the wise utilization of time is a fundamental imperative. As we usher in the auspicious Vikram Samvat 2071, it serves as a reminder of time's unceasing influence over our lives. It symbolizes the continuity of existence and the cyclical nature of our culture and traditions. Just as the seasons change and the harvest arrives, so too does the wheel of time continue to turn, guiding us through the cycles of life and offering opportunities for renewal and growth.

In conclusion, the echoes of colonialism reverberate through various facets of Bharatiya life, from language to the calendar. The persistence of English in official and private communications underscores the enduring influence of the colonial past. Likewise, the dominance of the Gregorian calendar, despite the existence of numerous native calendars, highlights the challenges of decolonizing

the Bharatiya mind-set. Yet, amidst these influences, Bharat's rich cultural landscape endures, as it has for millennia, celebrating the New Year with age-old rituals and traditions. As we move forward into Vikram Samvat 2071, we are reminded of the profound power of time and the enduring spirit of a nation that has weathered the ebb and flow of centuries, emerging stronger and more resilient with each passing year.

Key message:

This article written in 2014, delves into the lasting impact of colonialism on Bharat's language and calendar systems, highlighting the continued use of English in official and private matters despite gaining independence. It discusses the prevalence of the Gregorian calendar over native Bharatiya calendars and explores the cultural significance of traditional New Year celebrations. The article emphasizes the need to preserve Bharat's cultural heritage in the face of modernity while also acknowledging the meticulous division of time in Bharatiya traditions. It ultimately underscores the enduring significance of time itself as Bharat enters into the new year, symbolizing renewal and growth.

8

Summer Holidays Challenge: Balancing Leisure and Responsibility

"Just spending time reading comics, watching video films, listening to music, roaming around with friends, merry-making, sleeping late at night, getting up late in the morning...."

"Mom, can't you stop your lectures?"

"Son Bhanu, since you are on vacation, you have the liberty to while away your time as per your wish."

"Can't I have the freedom to spend my time as I wish, even during vacations?"

"But one has to own responsibility along with getting freedom. One has to develop the capability for getting freedom."

"God knows when will I get rid of the pain of being dependent all the time?"

"When you will learn the art of living."

"Forget it, Mom, let me go out to experience freedom in the open," saying this, Bhanu rushed out of the house, towards his friend Ranjan's house.

This familiar argumentative scenario plays out in many households when long vacations for school children begin. Some parents, fed up with it, eagerly await the end of the vacations. If some parents try to stop their children, even the calmest children start arguing and fighting with them. In today's world, the number of students who resist listening and learning far exceeds those who embrace it. How can

overall balanced development of students occur when they are surrounded by neglect and overloaded with studies? However, one balanced person, sensitive and dutiful, is far better than several degree-holders without character. A balanced person is sensible, intelligent, seeks continuous learning, and is committed, a boon for the family, society, nation, and humanity.

Children from lower and middle income backgrounds often engage in household chores, learn new skills, and benefit from physical activities. However, they may miss out on quality education. On the other hand, children from affluent backgrounds have access to numerous facilities without putting in much effort. Their entertainment comes from various games, but they may lack the warmth, and companionship of their parents.

For balanced personal development, everyone, whether rich or poor, requires appropriate resources and efforts. Both, feeling arrogant due to wealth or feeling ashamed due to poverty is detrimental. It is crucial for parents, guardians, teachers, and leaders to support and enable youngsters to ensure a healthy and balanced growth of the nation. A positive environment nurtures positive minds, while a negative environment breeds negativity. Children with a positive mindset are a boon to the family and nation, while those with a negative mindset are a curse to both. Bhanu's future path will reveal whether he becomes a boon or a bane.

When Bhanu reached his friend Ranjan's house, he overheard Ranjan's sister discussing something with her friend.

"I don't agree that being a bookworm is the key to success. Good students don't limit themselves to the narrow objectives of education. They understand its broader goals, and their daily routines remain structured, even during vacations."

"So, you're saying vacations are boring for them?"

"No, vacations aren't meant for freedom from studies and routines. They're golden opportunities to identify weaknesses and work on them, to build the capability and strength needed to face future challenges."

"Should we spend the whole time indoors, then?"

"I didn't say that. We should also contribute to household work. It's our duty to help those who have supported our progress and development."

We should develop physically, mentally, and spiritually. Cultivate creative, aesthetic, and artistic hobbies, read good magazines and books to expand our vocabulary, and improve our language skills through writing, perhaps blogging, and more."

"But if every girl becomes a poet or writer..."

"So what? I make the most of my vacations, utilizing them fully. I enjoy it that way. Forgive me if you didn't like some of what I said."

"Oh, come on. You're acting like Grannies. The truth is, fun isn't your destiny. Okay, Ta-Ta Bye-Bye," and the friend left.

Bhanu found a corner to hide in. He had come to Ranjan's house seeking entertainment, but after overhearing this conversation, he felt enlightened. As he was about to leave, he felt Ranjan's hand on his shoulder.

"You're here? I was just about to come to your place. Let's have some fun," Ranjan said.

"Not now. Your sister has opened my eyes and changed my thinking."

Ranjan laughed, "You fool. She's preparing for a debate. Forget what she said. Come, let's go."

Some people are born wise, some become wise by listening to others and experiencing hardships, while others ruin their lives through bad company. They get lost in ignorance, causing themselves and others pain.

Key message:

In this article, the lively dialogues and scenes portray the familiar clash of expectations between parents and children on vacation. Bhanu, seeking freedom, finds himself caught in a debate between his mother's concerns and Ranjan's sister's wisdom. The narrative highlights the importance of balanced personal development, regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds, and underscores the need for a supportive environment. The characters exemplify the struggle between leisure and responsibility during vacations, ultimately leaving readers with a reflection on the path to wisdom and a balanced life.



9

Verses of Valour:

Bankim Chandra and 'Vande Mataram'

The enduring national hymn 'Vande Mataram' was penned by the illustrious poet Bankim Chandra, born on 27th June 1838, in a respected Brahmin family in the Bengal village of 'Kantalpada' - 24 Paragana district. His given name, Bankim Chandra, signifies the second day of moonlit nights in Bengali. This name likely reflected his family's aspiration that, just as the moon waxes day by day from the second day, their name and fame would similarly grow alongside their son's accomplishments—a wish that exceeded all expectations.

A precocious child, Bankim Chandra astoundingly learned the 26 letters of the English alphabet in just one day, earning widespread acclaim in his town. His early education took place in Midnapur, with higher studies in Hugli. In addition to his formal studies, he had a deep-seated passion for reading texts from various fields at the library, particularly those in the Sanskrit language. In 1857, amid the turbulence and challenges of the times, Bankim Chandra and his friend

Yadunath Bose were the only two students to graduate from Presidency College.

His remarkable achievements led to his appointment as Deputy Collector by the Deputy Governor, a position he assumed at the age of just 21. While in this role, he also earned a Bachelor of Law degree. Subsequently, he was promoted to the position of District Magistrate. Despite his professional success and the respect he commanded from British officers due to his wisdom, integrity, and straightforwardness, Bankim Chandra harboured a personal aversion to the colonial rule, finding fault in their selfishness and stubbornness.

Bankim Chandra's early marriage at the tender age of 11 resulted in the loss of his beautiful and intelligent wife when he was 22. Following persistent persuasion, his family arranged his second marriage to Raj Lakshmi Devi. This union brought three daughters into his life, whom he raised as boys and provided with the best education.

Devoted to his nation and the cause of social upliftment, Bankim Chandra had a transformative moment while walking in a garden with his family. Upon encountering Commissioner Munroe during his stroll, he passed without greeting, prompting the commissioner's ire and a transfer to a remote area as punishment. Disheartened by such harassment, Bankim Chandra tendered his resignation, effectively ending his government service in 1891. Lieutenant Governor Eliot accepted his resignation and granted him a pension of 400 rupees.

Bankim Chandra's literary journey began with the publication of his social novel 'Vish Vriksh,' followed by 'Durgesh Nandini' and 'Kapaal Kundala.' His stories, including 'Mrinalini,' 'Chandrashekhar,' 'Raj Singh,' 'Devi Chowdharani,' 'Sita Ram,' among others, gained immense popularity. He sought to simplify the Sanskrit-influenced Bengali language in his writings to reach a wider readership. In total, he authored fifteen novels, with his English work, 'Rammohan's Wife,' gaining recognition and establishing him as a distinguished writer. In 1872, he initiated the publication of the journal 'Bang Darshan,' emphasizing the significance of the national language and mother tongue while expressing his affinity for the language. Readers eagerly awaited each issue, as it featured reviews, poems, one-act plays, novels, and more, raising the standard of Bengali journalism during an era dominated by English.

One day, Bankim Chandra's daughter questioned why he spoke so passionately about Bharatmata (Mother India) but never showed her to them. This inquiry profoundly affected him. While pondering the question by the banks of the holy Ganges, he was inspired by the moon's shimmering rays on the river and the boatmen's songs praising Mother Ganga. This inspiration gave birth to the iconic 'Vande Mataram' song, which he hummed and shared with his daughter. Overwhelmed, she began dancing, and the news of this new composition spread like wildfire when it was published in 'Bang Darshan' on November 7, 1875.

The backdrop of Bankim Chandra's novel 'Anandmath,' was the 1773 severe famine in Bengal, a time of British indifference to the suffering of the people. His work depicted compelling scenes of clashes between the British and the populace, where love for the motherland emerged as the foremost priority and life's goal.

The 'Vande Mataram' song featured in this novel, earning Bankim Chandra the ire of the British authorities but uniting the Bharatiya masses in their struggle for independence. Despite facing British wrath, Bankim Chandra was resolute and unwavering, full of fervour for inspiring his countrymen towards freedom.

Bankim Chandra's novels and writings were translated into several languages, and he influenced many, including Swami Vivekananda, who sought inspiration from him. An original thinker, progressive, social reformer, and preacher, Bankim Chandra possessed a scientific and psychological approach to his writing. He closely observed his environment, conducted critical and deep analyses, and incorporated these observations in his novels.

Bankim Chandra delved deeply into Bharatiya epics such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas. He wrote in English on various topics from these epics, encouraging positive thinking among his readers. His works included books like 'Krishna-Charitra,' 'Dharm-Tatva,' 'Dev-Tatva,' and 'Gita,' and he embarked on translating the Vedas. Unfortunately in April 1894, at the age of 56, Bankim Chandra passed away, leaving a void in the world of profound thinkers, patriotic souls, and reformist saints.

Deen Bandhu Mitra, the renowned playwright, was a close friend of Bankim Chandra, and Mitra dedicated his novel 'Anandmath' to his

friend. In the vein of social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra launched campaigns to eradicate superstition and societal ills.

In 1905, Mahatma Gandhi proposed, "Today, millions of Bharatiya sing 'Vande Mataram' unitedly and with great enthusiasm. I believe this is a highly auspicious prayer and can serve as our national anthem. It should also be published in Gujarati and Devanagari scripts." Gandhi later commended the apt adjectives used in the song. Rabindranath Tagore composed music and a tune for 'Vande Mataram,' personally performing it at many public events. He noted that Hindus and Muslims sang the song together during the period of Bengal partition. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had different opinions, stating that the tune was not suitable for English bands. However, Master Krishna Rao demonstrated its suitability for English bands when he played it in front of 50,000 people using the Navy-Army's English band.

'Vande Mataram' found resonance with various freedom fighters and revolutionaries, including Veer Savarkar, Madanlal Dhingra, Anant Kanhere, Khudiram Bose, Prafulla Chaki, Surya Sen, Ram Prasad Bismil, and Bhagat Singh, who embraced the song even at the gallows. Subhash Chandra Bose adopted 'Vande Mataram' for Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army), with regular broadcasts from Singapore Akashvani. The song was sung on December 26, 1911, during the Indian National Congress meeting, receiving acclaim from senior leaders. It was also recorded by the French Gramophone Record Company Pathe for various occasions.

In 1926, at the Nagpur Congress meeting, a 14-year-old singer named Abhyankar sang 'Vande Mataram' in front of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Kaka Sahib Gadgil, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Acharya Dada Dharmadhikari, Govind Ballabh Pant, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, and Acharya Kripalani, leaving everyone spellbound. This song became the guiding mantra for the freedom struggle.

On the morning of August 15, 1947, Independence Day, Pt. Omkar Nath Thakur sang 'Vande Mataram' from Delhi Akashvani, following the suggestion of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Later, the renowned Carnatic singer Smt. M.S. Subbulakshmi performed it in her unique style, leaving the audience enthralled. Numerous eminent singers lent their voices to this national song.

'Vande Mataram' stands as a powerful anthem of Bharatiya pride and glory, a song with a rich history and the potential to occupy the place it rightfully deserves.

Key message:

The article chronicles the life and contributions of Bankim Chandra, the renowned poet who penned Bharat's national song, 'Vande Mataram.' Born in Bengal, he excelled in education and government service, eventually resigning due to his love for the motherland. His literary works, including social novels and essays, inspired readers and played a pivotal role in Bharat's quest for freedom. 'Vande Mataram' became an anthem of unity and resistance during the independence movement. The article highlights Bankim Chandra's enduring legacy, with the song continuing to evoke national pride and patriotism, emphasizing the need for its rightful recognition.

Vande Mataram:

Vande mataram! Vande mataram!

Sujalam, suphalam, malayajasitalam

Sasyashyamalam mataram!

Vande mataram!

Shubhra jyotsna pulakitayaminim,

Phulla kusumita, drumadala- sobhinim,

Suhasinim, sumadhura bhasinim

Sukhadam varadam mataram!

Vande mataram!

Awaiting the August Awakening: From Independence to Excellence

The relentless march of time bears witness to Bharat's struggle for independence, with each August leaving an indelible mark on the nation's history. The passage of time, divided by various calendars and belief systems, continues its ceaseless flow. In the Gregorian calendar, August arrives and departs year after year, but some Augusts hold a special place in Bharat's heart.

In August 1917, the oppressive grip of British rule tightened further. The colonial government's brutality escalated, leaving scars on the nation's psyche. Three years later, in August 1920, Lokmanya Tilak's resounding call, "Swatantrata Hamara Janmsiddha Adhikar Hai" (Freedom is our birth right), ignited a fervour of patriotism in the hearts of Bharatiya. August 1932 saw the British authorities intensify their policy of "Divide and Rule," targeting the lower castes. Mahatma Gandhi, the champion of unity, protested vehemently and even wrote to the British Prime Minister, demanding the withdrawal of this divisive policy.

By August 1940, the world was embroiled in the chaos of World War II, and Bharat found itself contributing to the war effort. The British rulers allowed Bharatiya to participate in the World War Advisory Committee. Then, in August 1942, the clarion call of "Angrezon Bharat Choro" (British Quit India) echoed through the Indian National Congress Committee. It was a unanimous declaration of Bharat's determination to break free. The rallying cry of "Karo ya Maro" (Do or

Die) resonated deeply, and the people dared to dream of imminent freedom. Finally, on August 15, 1947, Bharat achieved independence from British rule. However, this newfound "Swaraj" (freedom) did not immediately usher in "Suraj" (Good Governance), as the nation was partitioned into two.

While British forces were embroiled in World War II, Bharat launched a campaign to collect funds for the war and recruit soldiers to bolster the British defence effort. However, Mahatma Gandhi's call for Bharatiya to withhold contributions to the war effort and the armed forces led to his imprisonment, along with other top leaders. During this tumultuous period, an incident occurred aboard a massive Navy ship where Bharatiya workers daringly replaced the British Union Jack with the Bharatiya tricolour flag, resulting in severe punishment for those involved.

Meanwhile, Subhas Chandra Bose resigned from the post of Congress President and embarked on a remarkable journey. Disguised as a Pathan, he escaped to Germany via Kabul and sought Adolf Hitler's assistance for Bharat's struggle for freedom. However, both Hitler and Churchill declared that Bharat was not yet ready for independence, leaving Bharatiya feeling insulted and disheartened. Bose continued his quest for support in Japan and went on to establish the Indian National Army (INA). Many Bharatiya joined the INA, including senior naval officers. In Burma (now Myanmar), Bose's army declared war against the British, and their pocket-sized tricolour Bharatiya flag became a powerful symbol. When faced with Bharatiya soldiers from the British Army, a glimpse of the flag was all it took to halt the combat, as fellow countrymen hesitated to fight. This rebellion within the Navy and Army rattled the British.

In another episode, leaders of the All India Students' Association, inspired by the "Tit for Tat" policy, met Mahatma Gandhi in jail and sought his blessings for their cause. Gandhi, a staunch advocate of non-violence, could only respond, "I am the follower of Ahimsa (Non-Violence)," leaving the students to take their revolutionary message to the entire nation in 1942. The result was widespread damage to governmental institutions, offices, buildings, railway lines, and roadways. With the Army deeply committed to the world war, the police force struggled to control the organized revolt that had swept across the nation. In response to this escalating unrest, the British

government decided to release Gandhi and other top leaders from jail, promising Bharat its freedom after the war's conclusion. However, the path to freedom was far from straight-forward.

Now in 2014, 67 years after Bharat's hard-won independence, the nation stands at crossroads. Around 30% of the population lives below the poverty line, grappling with illiteracy, poverty, poor health, homelessness, and soaring inflation. Many people lack access to basic necessities like food and clothing, residing in slums and on footpaths. Corruption scandals continue to plague the nation. Desperate farmers, burdened by insurmountable debts, resort to suicide, further highlighting the growing wealth gap between the rich and poor.

The path forward necessitates a fundamental conceptual revolution, rooted in instilling a robust value system, providing quality education in national languages or mother tongues, and promoting social values such as integrity, patriotism, and Bharatiya civilization and culture. These changes would empower the common man to access basic necessities regularly. The question remains: when will the August of genuine transformation arrive?

As the wheel of time continues to turn, Bharat grapples with its challenges, seeking to bridge the gap between the dream of independence and the reality of good governance, ensuring that the August of true progress dawns upon the nation. Awaiting the August awakening.

Key message:

This article reflects on the significance of August in Bharat's struggle for independence, recounting pivotal moments in various Augusts, from Lokmanya Tilak's call for freedom in 1920 to the Quit India Movement in 1942. It highlights the sacrifices and efforts of leaders like Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose. The article also addresses the challenges Bharat faces today, including poverty, inequality, and corruption. It calls for a transformative revolution rooted in values and education, aiming for genuine progress. The article raises the question of when Bharat will experience the August of substantial change.



11

Raksha Bandhan: A Modest Thread Weaving Strong Bonds

The festivals that form an integral part of our cultural landscape are not merely rituals; they are repositories of a shared psychological vision and moral principles. Sadly, this profound essence often remains veiled, known to only a select few who appreciate the true depth of these celebrations. Raksha Bandhan, for instance, stands as a symbol of auspiciousness, a cleanser of ill-feelings, and a guardian of women's well-being. However, it should never serve as a platform for ostentation or displays of wealth, as such notions detract from its true spirit.

Understanding our culture, taking pride in our civilization, and grasping the fundamental purpose of our festivals are essential steps toward educating future generations about their significance. Failure to do so risks further distortions and misunderstandings, potentially leading to the irreversible loss of these timeless traditions.

The month of Shraavan arrives with lush greenery, gentle rains, and the

blossoming of exquisite flowers across gardens. During this idyllic season, the sweet melodies of cuckoos fill the air, while peacocks gracefully dance, creating a delightful and harmonious atmosphere. It is amidst this backdrop that Raksha Bandhan unfolds, a day when sisters tie a Kalava, a sacred red and yellow thread, around their brothers' wrists. In return, the brother solemnly pledges to protect his sister from adversities and challenges.

Over time, however, undesirable changes have crept into this once-simple ritual. The humble sacred thread has been replaced by ornate and costly Rakhis. Yet, Raksha Bandhan's roots in Bharat's history run deep, exemplified by a legendary incident involving the renowned Rajasthani queen Karnavati. She had torn a thread from her saree, soaked it in her own blood, and sent it to the Mughal Emperor Humayun, seeking his protection. Despite his Muslim faith, Humayun respected this Bharatiya tradition and safeguarded Queen Karnavati from his own army. He also secured the release of her imprisoned husband.

The origin of Raksha Bandhan is rooted in mythology and has several legends associated with it. According to one legend, Lord Krishna's commitment to righteousness was evident when he defeated the malevolent King Shishupal to protect Dharma. However, in the battle, he sustained an injury, leaving his finger bleeding. Draupadi, moved by his suffering, tore a strip from her saree to staunch the flow of blood, showcasing her deep sisterly love and compassion. Lord Krishna cherished her care and pledged to repay her kindness in the future. Years later, the Pandavas faced a cruel twist of fate as they lost Draupadi to the deceitful Kauravas in a game of dice. When the Kauravas attempted to strip Draupadi of her dignity, Lord Krishna intervened with his divine powers, safeguarding her honour.

Traditionally, sisters would apply Tilak on their brothers' foreheads, tie Rakhis, worship them, and offer sweets. Brothers, in turn, would reciprocate with tokens of affection, such as gifts or cash. However, contemporary celebrations often revolve around the exchange of money, reducing the festival to a financial transaction.

Today, Raksha Bandhan is at the risk of becoming a formality with the genuine bond between brothers and sisters gradually fading. Bharat's Vedic culture, steeped in ancient wisdom, has garnered admiration from around the world. Bharat was often referred to as Vishwa Guru,

the teacher of the world. However, the essence and significance of our festivals has become lost in the clamour for materialistic displays and competition.

This disconnect between modern celebrations and their intended spirit cannot be solely attributed to the younger generation. The onus lies with the older generation to educate and pass down the values and traditions to future generations. Parents, guardians, the education system, textbooks, and various media platforms, including newspapers, journals, magazines, television, and films, all share the responsibility of fostering cultural awareness and understanding.

Politicians and governments also play a pivotal role in motivating and enlightening the younger generation about the profound essence of our Bharatiya culture. It is incumbent upon us, as Bharatiya, to ensure that the core message and spirit of our festivals remain intact amidst a changing world. We must reacquaint ourselves with these traditions, educate others, and instil this knowledge in younger generations.

The sacred festival of Raksha Bandhan serves to cleanse our hearts, protect our sisters, and instil virtuous values within us. It is our duty to take pride in comprehending our religion, its fundamental objectives, our culture, traditions, and festivals, and to incorporate and uphold them in our lives.

Key message:

Raksha Bandhan, an integral Bharatiya festival, seems to be losing its essence in a materialistic world. The article delves into the festival's historical and mythological significance. While the festival symbolizes auspiciousness and women's protection, it is being marred by ostentation. Today's celebrations seem to revolve around financial exchanges, undermining the authentic bond between siblings. The article calls on the elders to educate and pass down cultural values, emphasizing and preserving the festival's true spirit.

Celebrating the Light of Knowledge on Teacher's Day

On September 5th, the birth anniversary of the late Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, we celebrate Teacher's Day, a day dedicated to honouring our fellow educators. Dr. Radhakrishnan, who served as Bharat's President, had an illustrious career as a teacher before assuming the highest office in the land. His legacy as an educator extended not only across Bharatiya cities like Madras (now Chennai), Kolkata, and Benaras (now Varanasi) but also to prestigious universities abroad, such as Oxford and Cambridge. Beyond his presidency, he was a renowned philosopher, leaving behind an inspiring biography and a body of work that continues to illuminate the path of wisdom.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's profound impact on education and his stature as a scholar of Sanskrit and English led to the declaration of his birthday as Teacher's Day. This gesture serves as a reminder of the vital role we teachers play in society. It's a poignant reflection on the value of education, considering that we are the bedrock upon which a nation's intellectual and moral foundation is built.

In post-Independence Bharat, while acknowledging teachers as the pillars of society, there was also a realization that their social and financial conditions often did not match the respect they deserved. Teacher's Day became a way to emphasize the importance of educators and their contributions to the nation's progress.

Imagine a world without teachers. In ancient times, teachers were held in such high regard that they were considered even more significant than the three principal deities in Hinduism: Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh. This reverence for teachers is beautifully encapsulated in the words of Kabir Dasji, who said,

"Gur Govind Dou Khade, Kake Lagoon Paon, Balihari Guru aapne, Govind Diyo bataye."

This verse emphasizes that when faced with the choice of bowing to either a teacher or a deity, one should first pay homage to the teacher, as they are the ones who introduce us to the divine wisdom.

Our role as teachers goes beyond imparting knowledge; we have the power to shape individuals into gems and patriots by moulding their minds and characters. The true strength lies in wisdom, and the most valuable wealth is knowledge.

We are entrusted with a significant responsibility. We must possess a deep understanding of our subjects and our students. It is our duty to inspire and guide our students to become responsible citizens. Every day, we have countless opportunities to shape the future by nurturing young minds, and we must seize these moments.

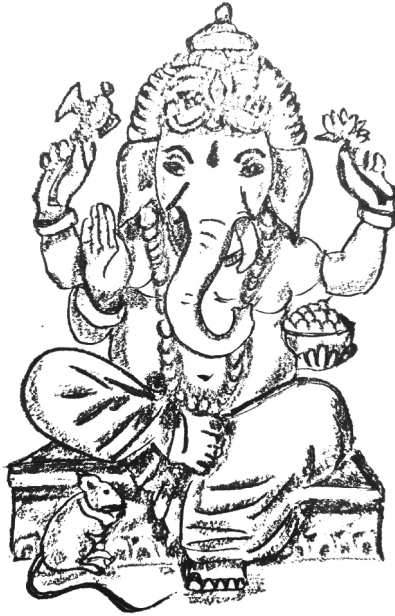
As we celebrate Teacher's Day, let us pledge not only to focus on our own well-being and growth but also to extend a helping hand to those who are weak and underprivileged, aiding them in their development.

Furthermore, let us commit to fulfilling the expectations parents have for teachers in shaping their children's future. Let us uphold the highest standards of patriotism, for education is the cornerstone of a nation's progress. On this day, we recognize and celebrate the tireless efforts of educators who illuminate the path of knowledge and inspire generations to come.

Key message:

The article captures the essence of Teacher's Day, marking the birth of Dr. Radhakrishnan, a distinguished teacher who later became the President of Bharat. It highlights the critical role teachers play in society, emphasizing their ability to shape individuals into gems and patriots by imparting wisdom and character. The article acknowledges the historical reverence for teachers, even above deities, and emphasises their pivotal role in introducing students to

knowledge and values. The article urges teachers to embrace opportunities to nurture young minds and pledge to meet parental expectations and uphold patriotism. Overall, it honours the dedication of educators in illuminating the path of knowledge.



13

Sri Ganesh:

Peak Devotion and Auspicious Beginning

If one carefully observes and reflects, it becomes evident that our ancient sages and saints possessed remarkable insight when defining the rituals for worshipping various deities. Each deity represents specific qualities, and devotees choose their ideals based on personal needs and beliefs.

Worship, however, extends beyond rituals like ringing bells, lighting incense, and singing hymns before an idol. Similar to how we select our meals to nourish our bodies, our choice of deity should inspire us to integrate their qualities into our character. For instance, when worshipping Lord Ganesh, it's essential to understand the virtues associated with him.

Originally known as Vinayak, Lord Ganesh is believed to have been born on the fourth day of the full moon in the month of Bhadrapad. Ancient stories recount how this glorious child transformed into 'Gajanan', the one with the head of an elephant. Devotees install Lord

Ganesh's statue for ten days during this period, committing to adopt his qualities.

Each part of Lord Ganesh's body symbolizes a positive attribute:

- **Big Forehead:** Conscience, wisdom, sharp memory, and analytical power.
- **Big Ears:** The power of attentive listening and learning from meaningful conversations.
- **Small Eyes:** The ability to make keen observations, like an elephant spotting a tiny ant from a distance.
- **Long Trunk:** Representing farsightedness and carefulness.
- **One broken tooth:** Symbolizes his devotion and respect to his parents. He once defended his father's honour by taking a blow from Saint Parshuram's axe to ensure his safety while Lord Shiva rested.
- **Big Stomach:** Reflecting an appreciation for nourishing food and the retention of significant discussions.
- **Yagyopaveet (The Sacred Thread):** Symbolizing obligations towards parents, gurus, and nature.
- **Four Arms:** Signifying heightened power and capability, with each arm representing different aspects, including the power to eliminate desires, eternal devotion, joy through sacrifice, and blessings for the righteous.
- **Black Rat:** A symbol of simplicity, modesty, and tolerance, as it supports the weight of Lord Ganesh.
- **Two Wives (Riddhi and Siddhi):** Representing accomplishment, success, prosperity, and flourishing.

Worshipping Lord Ganesh is similar to honouring several deities at once, as he embodies all ten symbols of Dharma. He is known as Vighna-Vinashak (remover of obstacles) and Gana-pati (People's King). Initiating any auspicious work is often referred to as "SriGanesh."

Lord Ganesh's statues can be found in various countries worldwide, each with its unique name and interpretation. Renowned figures like Shivaji and Lokmanya Tilak have been devoted followers, contributing to the widespread celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi in Bharat.

While change is inevitable over time, modernization and development aren't inherently negative. However, they should not lead to the erosion of culture. Unfortunately, in some instances, culture is taking a backseat in our country, with religion sometimes reduced to mere entertainment. Values are deteriorating, and cultural events are marred by inappropriate content. It is essential to maintain the essence of these traditions and celebrate them with respect and integrity.

Just as devotees immerse Ganesh idols with care, within ten days, to prevent disrespect or damage, let us immerse ourselves in the profound teachings of our traditions, protecting and cherishing the essence of our culture for a brighter, more harmonious future.

Key message:

The article highlights the role of deities like Lord Ganesh, whose symbolic attributes serve as timeless reminders of the virtues individuals can aspire to embody in their lives. The key message of the article is that the essence of religious worship should go beyond rituals and external observance, encouraging individuals to embody the qualities and virtues associated with the deities they worship. It also emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural and religious traditions while adapting to modernity and calls for a mindful and respectful approach to celebrations and practices.

Dashehra: A Celebration of Triumph Over Evil and Inner Renewal

During the rainy season, traffic congestion due to waterlogging is a common woe in metropolitan and large cities, with rural areas face even worse challenges as rivers overflow and low-lying areas become submerged.

Among the world's major countries, Bharat stands out as the sole nation where the monsoon season typically extends for nearly four months. Additionally, Bharat experiences two other significant seasons, each spanning approximately four months. Consequently, residents in low-lying regions proactively relocate to higher areas well in advance of the monsoon season to mitigate the associated challenges. To cope with the difficulties, people retreat indoors, engaging in activities like singing, dancing, and worship.

In Gujarat, the Navratri period just before Vijaya Dashami involves body and mind discipline. In northern states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, Ramlila performances during the day and plays at night foster religious and artistic appreciation. In these festivities, the name of Lord Ram is invoked to gain control over one's senses and emotions, offering solace and relief from life's sorrows.

Shubh-Muhoort (auspicious time): As this time approaches, villagers begin returning to their low-lying homes as rivers recede, and the mud dries on roads and fields. The appearance of the Agastya muni star

(Canopus) signals the arrival of autumn, marked by blooming lily flowers and flocks of flamingos in the sky.

Villagers repair and renovate their homes, rejoicing at the sight of their sugarcane crops, and prepare for the next planting season. Businessmen resume their journeys, Kshatriyas clean their vehicles and weapons, and kings seek to expand their realms. Astrologically, this period is highly favourable for starting new endeavours, symbolizing the commencement of Lord Ram's journey to Lanka on this very day, aiming to restore Aryan culture's values of truth and justice.

The legend of Raavan, or Dashanan, reveals a cautionary tale. Despite his vast knowledge, Raavan's inability to control his lust, anger, greed, and jealousy led to his downfall. Knowledge, wealth, and physical prowess alone are insufficient for personal development. Equally vital are a good conscience, spiritual behaviour, and character development, eliminating the gap between thought, words and actions.

Dashanan (Raavan): The moniker "Dashanan" stems from Raavan's childhood arrogance when he killed a noble king and stole a necklace with nine diamonds. Upon wearing it, Raavan's reflection appeared in all nine gems, prompting his mother's remark that he resembled a ten-headed person. These ten heads symbolize his ten negative traits. The victory of Lord Ram over Raavan during Dushehra is a celebration of the triumph over these negative qualities. In northern Bharat, barley is sowed in clay pots nine days before Dushehra, with tender barley leaves placed on the ears of friends after a Yagna, signifying a commitment to embody the teachings of the preceding nine days.

Furthermore, various items like gold, silver, grains, ghee, and spices' prices are noted down. Books, pens, and weapons are placed in home temples, and household elders offer gifts or money to women and children. Embracing one another signifies the joy of Dushehra.

Shami Leaves: Shami leaves are considered as precious as gold for their medicinal properties and rust-removing capabilities on metallic weaponry. During the Mahabharata era, the Pandavas concealed their weapons in a Shami tree during their secret life, highlighting the leaves' significance. In another tale, when a student asked for Guru Bhavbhuti's guru dakshina (a donation for the teacher) of one thousand golden coins, Sri Raghu miraculously produced these coins

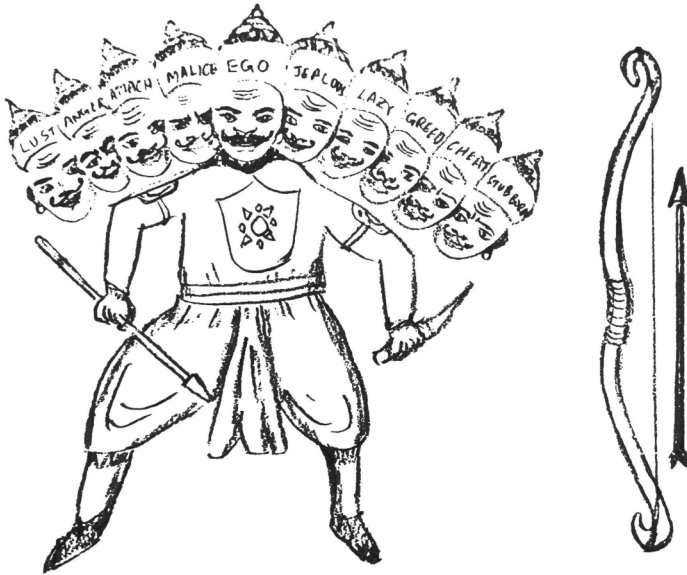
from Shami leaves, saving the student's honour.

Durga: Goddess Durga, who vanquished demons like Mahishasur, is worshipped during Navratri. She represents the power of Lord Shiva and is revered as the embodiment of knowledge, desire, and action. Durga's worship is linked to Lord Ram and Lord Krishna, and she is regarded as Lord Krishna's sister. In Nepal, she is worshipped as Taleju Bhavani, and in Mysore, Southern Bharat, as Chamundeshwari. Her various names include Kali, Ambika, Bhavani, Gauri, and Chandika. Her worship emphasizes the triumph of good over evil and the importance of power, practice, penance, and spiritualism in controlling the senses and defining one's behaviour.

Dashehra encompasses natural, scientific, economic, psychological, philosophical, and spiritual aspects of human needs. Rather than focusing solely on burning a giant effigy of Raavan and setting off fireworks, it is crucial to reflect on the festival's lessons and their application to our daily lives. Ultimately, Dashehra teaches us to embrace constructive lifestyles and cultivate positive qualities.

Key message:

Dashehra, a celebrated Bharatiya festival, marks the triumph of good over evil and spiritual renewal. It signifies the victory of Lord Ram over the demon King Raavan, representing the conquest of negative qualities. Dashehra embodies a holistic approach, encompassing natural, scientific, economic, psychological, philosophical, and spiritual aspects of human needs. Instead of focusing solely on symbolic effigy burning and fireworks, the festival encourages reflection on its profound lessons and their application to daily life, promoting constructive lifestyles and positive qualities.



15

Raavan's Incomplete Wisdom: Lessons from Ramayan

There are two types of wisdom, 'Apara' and 'Para.' 'Apara' wisdom encompasses practical knowledge, including subjects like mathematics, science, politics, and economics, while 'Para' wisdom delves into spiritual enlightenment and self-realization. Many consider themselves educated based on 'Apara' knowledge alone, which is acquired through study. However, true education involves deep thinking, analysis, experiential learning, ethical behaviour, self-discipline, and spiritual practices. 'Apara' knowledge is essential for materialistic life, but it must be complemented by 'Para' knowledge, fostering mental, moral, and spiritual development, connecting the self with the divine and leading to ultimate liberation.

Raavan possessed 'Apara' knowledge but lacked 'Para' wisdom, leading to an incomplete development and the prevalence of negative qualities. Despite his physical power, his ego, greed, anger, and cruelty overshadowed his good qualities, making him an atheist.

Raavan's childhood incident of stealing a necklace with nine diamonds earned him the name 'Dashashan' or ten-headed, reflecting his arrogance.

Raavan lacked good mentors in his life, and attempts by his wife Mandodari, brother Vibhishan, and others to guide him were futile due to his stubbornness and ego. His sister Shoorpanakha instigated the abduction of Sita, but Raavan failed to win her heart. Hanuman, a devoted follower of Lord Ram, reached Sita in Ashok Vatika and when Raavan captured him he set Lanka on fire. Eventually, Lord Ram's army, supported by forest-dwellers, tribes, and monkeys, invaded Lanka, leading to Raavan's downfall. In his dying moments, Raavan acknowledged his incomplete development due to the lack of 'Para' wisdom.

Lord Ram instructed Lakshman to approach the dying Raavan and seek his final wisdom. Lakshman initially stood near Raavan's head, but Raavan remained silent. Lord Ram then directed Lakshman to move closer to Raavan's feet and make the request again. This time, Raavan agreed, despite his severe pain, and expressed remorse, acknowledging that his lack of knowledge of Para Vidya had left his development incomplete. He wished that others wouldn't make the same mistake in the future and blessed everyone. Lakshman raised his hands to bless Raavan, and that marked the end of Raavan's life. Raavan's end serves as a reminder to overcome negative qualities and appreciate the importance of social and interpersonal relationships, ultimately completing one's knowledge.

Brief explanation of a few related terms: These terms encompass various aspects of wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual practices. These concepts play a significant role in personal and spiritual development.

Manan: Signifies the art of profound contemplation, involving introspection and thoughtful reflection to acquire deeper insights and knowledge.

Vishleshan: Denotes a meticulous analysis or thorough examination, entailing an in-depth exploration of a subject or concept to attain profound wisdom and deeper understanding.

Gyan: Embodies the essence of wisdom and knowledge, embodying comprehension gained through experiential learning.

Aacharan: Emphasizes the significance of ethical conduct and

virtuous practices intertwined with the pursuit and application of knowledge.

Tap (as in Tapasya): Encompasses the practice of austerity and penance undertaken to attain spiritual enlightenment, necessitating self-discipline and inner restraint.

Sadhana: Encapsulates spiritual discipline and practice, encompassing a spectrum of techniques and rituals aimed at personal growth, self-realization, and the attainment of elevated knowledge and consciousness.

Vivek: Refers to discernment, the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, and to make judicious decisions.

Pratibha: Symbolizes innate talent and aptitude, reflecting one's inherent abilities and potential across various domains of knowledge.

Medha: Represents intelligence and cognitive capacity, particularly in terms of grasping and comprehending knowledge.

Vidya: Embodies the pursuit of knowledge and education, encompassing both worldly and spiritual wisdom, with a focus on the quest for enlightenment.

Jnana: Signifies transcendental knowledge, often associated with spiritual wisdom, self-realization, and a profound understanding of existence.

Vairagya: Represents a state of detachment and dispassion, embodying the willingness to relinquish worldly attachments and desires, leading to inner liberation.

Samadhi: Denotes a state of deep meditation or trance, characterized by complete absorption of the mind into a singular point of focus, resulting in heightened awareness and union with higher consciousness.

Yoga: Encompasses our ancient practice combining physical postures (asanas), breathing exercises (pranayama), and meditation to foster physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Pragya: Embodies a state of heightened consciousness and wisdom, representing profound understanding and knowledge that transcends ordinary perception.

Hritambara: Signifies divine wisdom and intuitive knowledge residing within the heart, enabling access to higher truths and the ability to

make decisions guided by inner wisdom.

Key message:

The article distinguishes between 'Apara' and 'Para' wisdom. 'Apara' wisdom encompasses practical knowledge, while 'Para' wisdom delves into spiritual enlightenment and self-realization. The author emphasizes that true education involves deep thinking, ethical behaviour, self-discipline, and spiritual practices in addition to practical knowledge. Raavan, despite his 'Apara' knowledge, lacked 'Para' wisdom, resulting in incomplete personal development characterized by negative qualities. The article highlights the importance of mentorship, ethical behaviour, and spiritual enlightenment. Lord Ram's victory over Raavan illustrates the triumph of good over evil. In his final moments, Raavan acknowledged his incomplete development due to the absence of 'Para' wisdom.



16

Deepotsav: The Path from Darkness to Wisdom

Deepotsav (festival of lights), often celebrated as Diwali, holds a profound significance in Bharatiya culture. It's a festival that transcends religious boundaries and embodies universal themes of light, knowledge, and unity. The festival's origin, as explored through research, unveils a deeper connection between human existence and the symbolism of lamps, oil, and light.

The Universal Symbolism of Lamps

A lamp, or 'Deepak', symbolizes human beings. This symbolism is not tied to any specific sect or religion, emphasizing its secular and universal nature. The oil and wick within the lamps represent the human soul, while the radiant light embodies knowledge. This fundamental interpretation highlights the festival's broader message of enlightenment and inner illumination.

The Fascinating Word 'Deepawali'

The term 'Deepawali' comprises two words: 'Deep' and 'Awali', a row of lamps/lights. The shorter version, 'Diwali,' is commonly used, but a similar-sounding word, 'diwala,' carries a different connotation, denoting financial loss. During this auspicious occasion, no one wishes to experience such loss, emphasizing the desire for prosperity and abundance.

Deepotsav: A Cultural Kaleidoscope

Delving into the essence of Deepotsav reveals diverse versions of the festival. Looking beyond the globalized traditions and rituals, a glimpse into Bharat's agrarian villages unveils common behaviours that are deeply rooted in the agricultural calendar. People residing in low-lying areas or valleys anticipate the impending rainy season by migrating to higher ground. They carry their belongings and even livestock, embracing a nomadic life during this period.

With the arrival of the Ashwin month, they return to their villages. Their first task involves repairing and renovating their mud houses, which often bear the brunt of the monsoon rains. Prior to the moonless night (Amavasya) of the Kartik month, these villagers paint their homes, conduct ceremonies like 'havan/yagna,' and burst firecrackers to ward off insects and wild animals.

Furthermore, they prepare massive clay containers to store their precious agricultural produce, the backbone of their economy. To safeguard against anti-social elements, countless clay lamps and torches illuminate every corner on the darkest night of the year. The villagers stay awake throughout the night, celebrating through song and dance. These activities, while practical, highlight the villagers' deep connection with nature.

Despite their hard work and practicality, many rural areas still lack modern facilities such as accessible roads, electricity, schools, hospitals, and adequate safety and security measures. Politicians often visit these villages during elections, making promises but rarely delivering on all of them. This disparity underscores the challenges faced by the rural population, despite being the backbone of the nation's economy.

Urban Celebrations: A Different Scenario

Urban areas present a contrasting picture. Well-maintained roads, extensive lighting systems, multi-storeyed buildings, markets, offices,

educational institutions, hospitals, and robust police forces create a different ambience. Before Deepotsav, urban dwellers paint and renovate their houses, adorning them with strings of lights on Diwali night.

People stay up through the night, engaging in card games, gambling, chess, and traditional board games. Loud music and revelry often exceed the bounds of decency. Businessmen inaugurate their new accounting books praying to Goddess Lakshmi to seek her blessings. Donations are considered auspicious, but exorbitant spending on firecrackers contributes to noise and air pollution. Every year, fire accidents occur due to the extensive use of fireworks.

In urban areas, these celebrations often become a show of wealth and an unhealthy competition with neighbours. While these festivities provide entertainment, they can also lead to excess and waste.

Mythological and Cultural Significance

Deepawali isn't a fleeting event; it spans at least five days, each with unique significance.

- Vaidyaraj Dhanvantari's Birthday (Trayodashi): Worship and devotion kick-start the celebrations.
- Narak Chaturdhashi (14th night): Marked by Lord Krishna's triumph over the demon Narkasur, it signifies purification and renewal.
- Kartik Amavasya (15th day): The heart of Deepawali, a night of lamps and vigils, keeps darkness and anti-social elements at bay. Ayodhya welcomes Lord Ram with colourful alpanas/rangolis and festivities.
- Next Day of Deepawali (16th day): A day dedicated to worshipping Bali, Govardhan, and Annakut.
- Yam Dwitiya & Bhaiya Dooj (17th day): Sisters worship their brothers, invoking Yamraj's blessings, and celebrating important events.

Preserving Cultural Essence

As time passes, changes in circumstances, mindsets, and traditions naturally occur. However, it's essential not to lose sight of the core essence of our culture and get carried away by external influences. It is equally important to remember the underlying rationale and

objectives of our traditions and rituals.

Is it wise to turn a joyful day into a sombre one due to fire accidents and disturbances to neighbours?

The true wealth of a society lies in the development and application of wisdom. It is a collective responsibility to foster wisdom, making it everyone's duty. By doing so, we can create a more harmonious and pure natural and social environment. When we dispel the darkness of ignorance, we can bask in a brighter and more pleasant light. The age-old adage, "Tam-so-ma-jyotir gamay" ("Oh God, lead us from darkness to the light of wisdom"), resonates deeply in this context.

In conclusion, let us unite to ignite an intellectual revolution that makes Deepotsav a celebration free from noise and air pollution. This transformation will infuse the festival with true meaning, reminding us all of the universal values it embodies: light, knowledge, and unity.

Key message:

The article delves into the origin and significance of Deepotsav, highlighting its universal symbolism. It equates the lamp (Deepak) with humanity, the oil and wick with the soul, and the light with knowledge. While exploring rural and urban observances, it underscores the need to preserve the festival's true essence and rationale. The article advocates a shift towards a more intellectually and ecologically responsible celebration, emphasizing the importance of wisdom and enlightenment. Deepotsav's profound message of moving from darkness to light is a call for an intellectual revolution, transcending traditional rituals for a brighter and more meaningful celebration.



17

Today's Toddlers, Tomorrow's Citizens

In contemporary times, the age-old proverb, "Kheloge Koodoge to hoga Kharab, Padhoge Likhoge to hoga Nawab" has undergone a transformation. It once implied that focusing solely on play would lead to ruin, while concentrating on education would result in prosperity. However, the modern era has reshaped this wisdom. To achieve a "Nawab's status", which represents affluence and leadership, one must now acquire proficiency in both academics and sports, as they have both become equally vital. A sound body is a prerequisite for a sound mind.

Today, sports are not merely a physical pursuit but are also regarded as a form of knowledge, akin to skills. Athletes receive coaching from both domestic and international trainers to excel in global competitions, such as the Olympics. Potential champions approach their training with the same dedication as studious learners, contributing to their nations' pride and glory. Embracing this philosophy, we learn every day, we remain perpetual students in life.

A true student comprehends the essence of knowledge, which can be broken down into two broad categories: 'Para Vidya' and 'Apara Vidya.' 'Para Vidya' encompasses tangible knowledge relevant to business, financial success, and materialistic pursuits, such as skills honed through degrees and certifications. It deals with worldly and superficial knowledge. In ancient Bharat, Gurukuls imparted 64 different forms of such knowledge. In contrast, 'Apara Vidhya' connects us with the divine and the soul, fostering a sense of spirituality and potentially leading to salvation.

When the colonial rule began, many of our traditional knowledge systems were lost or forgotten. Lord Macaulay introduced an education system that predominantly produced clerks, not thinkers. The emphasis was on English language and culture, which became synonymous with employment and sustenance. Only a limited number of subjects were taught. Unfortunately, even after gaining independence, Bharatiya culture continued to be neglected. Our rich heritage, recorded in Sanskrit, remained unexplored despite being an ideal and scientific language, even for computers.

Scientists assert that a child's brain is fully developed by the age of five, leading to the 'Upnayan Sanskar' ceremony. During this ritual, children wear a sacred element called 'Janeyu,' consisting of three threads. They touch these threads, symbolizing three debts they must repay in life: the debt to their parents, the debt to their teachers, and the debt to nature (Pitri, Rishi, Dev rin). 'Janeyu' serves as a constant reminder, worn throughout one's life. After this ceremony, a child becomes a 'Dwij,' meaning 'second stage' like a bird that emerges from an egg, signifying transformation, and the beginning of independence.

However, today, anyone who wears 'Janeyu' is labeled a Brahmin, which is a misconception. Brahmin status is not determined by birth but by one's deeds, wisdom, abilities, and capabilities. These titles were once conferred during convocation ceremonies based on merit. Unfortunately, these titles have been reduced to caste distinctions.

Brahmacharya, loosely translated, signifies "embarking on the path of Brahma" or "remaining aligned with one's inner self and soul." This term represents a way of life conducive to the quest for sacred wisdom and spiritual liberation. Brahmacharya is a journey, not an ultimate goal. While popular culture often associates it with celibacy, its

essence lies in dedicating a phase of life to focused learning. The 'Upnayan Sanskar' ushers a child into the path of wisdom, symbolized by 'Medha,' which fosters intellect and prudence. 'Medha' enables the differentiation between right and wrong and promotes innovative thinking. Similarly, 'Pragya' and 'Ritambara' wisdom guide us on a spiritual journey, ultimately leading to salvation.

Children must understand the four fundamental objectives of human life: "Dharm, Arth, Kaam, and Moksh"—Dharma (righteousness, moral values), Artha (prosperity, economic values), Kama (pleasure, love, psychological values) and Moksha (liberation, spiritual values, self-actualization). Vedic Sanskriti classifies human life into four stages: 'Bramhacharya' (learning and skill development), 'Grihasth' (family life and societal contributions), 'Vaanprasth' (detachment from worldly life), and 'Sanyas' (meditation for salvation). These stages have corresponding Ashrams for different aspects of life.

Unfortunately, our scholars, administrators, journalists, and politicians have continuously undermined our education system, caste system, and calendar. The duties of 'Bramhacharis' include challenging work for holistic development—body, intellect, mind, and soul. They must practice, meditate, control their senses, and strive for continuous self-improvement. Their behaviour stems from their thoughts. The future of our country rests in the hands of today's generation, filled with boundless potential. Today's toddlers are tomorrow's citizens, and it is our collective responsibility to guide them wisely.

Brief explanation of a few related terms:

In Bharatiya culture, intricately intertwined with Hinduism and indigenous philosophy, an array of terms elucidate the multifaceted realm of knowledge and wisdom.

Pratibha: Embodies innate intelligence, intuition, or the capacity to swiftly grasp concepts devoid of formal education or external guidance.

Explanation: Regarded as a divine bestowment or inner brilliance, Pratibha empowers individuals to comprehend intricate ideas, troubleshoot challenges, and excel in diverse domains without structured tutelage. This innate aptitude frequently finds expression in artistic, creative, or intellectual talents that appear to flow effortlessly—a manifestation of inner wisdom and divine grace.

Medha: Signifies intellectual prowess or intelligence acquired through study, learning, and knowledge assimilation.

Explanation: Medha epitomizes cognitive proficiencies honed through education, dedication, and diligence. It reflects the fruits of one's accumulated knowledge, faculty for reasoned thinking, and adeptness in practical knowledge application. Medha is often linked with academic excellence, discerning analytical faculties, and the ability to wield knowledge effectively. In spiritual contexts, Medha is considered pivotal for interpreting sacred texts and philosophical treatises.

Pragya: Represents elevated or transcendent wisdom, encompassing spiritual discernment, enlightenment, and profound insights into ultimate reality.

Explanation: Pragya transcends the boundaries of mere intellectual erudition, encompassing spiritual and philosophical enlightenment. It conveys an understanding of the self's nature and the interconnectedness of the universe, leading to profound insights into existence's fundamental essence. Pragya is typically associated with spiritual leaders, yogis, and enlightened souls who transcend mundane concerns to attain elevated consciousness and inner serenity.

Ritambara: Conveys being imbued with truth or divine knowledge, representing the pinnacle of wisdom.

Explanation: Ritambara signifies the zenith of knowledge, transcending ordinary human comprehension. It embodies the realization of absolute truth, the cosmic order, and the foundational principles governing the cosmos. Ritambara knowledge is believed to be attainable through deep meditation, spiritual revelations, or divine insights. It is associated with profound enlightenment and a direct communion with the divine.

These terms serve as cornerstones in shaping the philosophical outlook and values of individuals within this cultural and philosophical medley.

Key message:

In this article, the author delves into the vital interplay between academics and physical activity in today's pursuit of success. Sports, as the author posits, transcend mere recreation; they embody a realm of knowledge. Coaches play a pivotal role in shaping champions who

seamlessly integrate rigorous training with mental sharpness. True scholars, in their quest for wisdom, explore the realms of 'Para Vidya' (worldly knowledge) and 'Apara Vidya' (spiritual insight). The legacy of colonialism has left a lasting impact on our education system, and the author examines the need to instil our youth with holistic values and wisdom. Concepts such as Janeyu, the Gayatri mantra, the four fundamental life objectives, and the four stages of human existence add depth to this exploration.

Children's Education and Literature: Preserving Cultural Richness

When we delve into the realm of Children's Literature, our minds often journey back to the timeless classics of our culture like Hitopadesh and PanchTantra. Surprisingly, these literary treasures find greater acclaim abroad due to their translations into numerous languages. Some foreigners even dedicated themselves to learning Sanskrit to explore these literary gems in their original form and subsequently translate them for their compatriots. The allure of these books was so compelling that it fuelled a quest for knowledge and wisdom spanning continents. Unfortunately, in our own land, the colonial era intertwined English with livelihood, as Lord Macaulay introduced an education system primarily aimed at churning out clerks well-versed in English. This shift eclipsed our local languages and cultivated an inclination towards Western values. We must not forsake our "Dev Bhasha" (Language of the Gods) as it connects us to our profoundly rich and scientific heritage.

In contemporary times, books like "Harry Potter" have stormed global markets, breaking records in their wake. Even its Hindi translation, "Hari Puttar," gained traction. English books, with their vibrant colours and glossy pages, get promoted extensively, resulting in staggering sales.

Given the limitation of space, in this article I offer a concise overview of children's education.

It's crucial to acknowledge that Bharat is home to the world's largest population of illiterates. Even those deemed literate often fall short of being truly educated. True education should foster holistic character development, a facet historically nurtured in our Gurukuls (ancient Bharatiya schools). Gurukuls segregated students by gender, admitting children aged 6 to 10. Girls received education until 18, while boys continued until 25. During this formative period, they received comprehensive care and evolved into well-rounded individuals. Upon graduation, they were categorized as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, or Shudras based on their capabilities, conduct, and performance. They were treated as equals and likened to the "Virat Purush" (Universal Man), each playing a role reflecting their strengths. Brahmins represented the intellect, Kshatriyas embodied strength and valour, Vaishyas signified commerce and entrepreneurship, while Shudras symbolized physical labour. Regrettably, the reservation policy has introduced complexities into this system.

Mothers are the child's first teachers, imprinting culture and values that shape their behaviour and thinking throughout life.

Notably, a child's brain undergoes significant development until the age of five. At this juncture, the "Upnayan" ceremony is performed, during which the child dons a "Janeyu" adorned with three threads representing three debts: to God, to Sages or Teachers, and to Father or Parents (Dev Rin, Rishi Rin, and Pitri Rin). The child regularly touches these sacred threads, the Janeyu, is reminded and commits to repaying these moral debts. To honour these obligations, it entailed bestowing our children with a quality education, imbuing them with unwavering ethical values and exemplary moral character, generously sharing the wisdom imparted by our revered gurus with others, and steadfastly safeguarding an environment free from pollutants. This underscores the significance of acquiring ethical intellect in the Gayatri Mantra.

Vedic Dharma is boundless, universally applicable, scientific, and beneficial to all living beings and the environment. Regrettably, various sects introduced fear and greed, fragmenting society into castes, creeds, and sub-castes. The caste system, once based on intellect and character, has deviated from its noble origins.

Today, there's a dearth of quality children's literature. It's imperative

to foster a virtuous environment within families and revamp primary school curricula to nurture holistic intellect and character development. Literature must be tailored to realize this vision, safeguarding Bharat's cultural heritage within these temples of education.

Key Message:

This article emphasizes the significance of preserving cultural richness in children's education and literature. While classics like Hitopadesh and PanchTantra have garnered international acclaim through translations, they are sometimes overlooked in their country of origin due to historical factors like colonial influence. The article highlights the need to revamp the education system to nurture holistic character development, drawing inspiration from ancient Gurukuls. It underscores the role of mothers as the first teachers and the importance of ceremonies like "Upnayan" in instilling values. The article advocates a shift towards literature that fosters ethical intellect and character development to preserve Bharat's cultural heritage.

Reservation Quandary: A Brewing Storm or a Ray of Hope?

One day, friends Kailash, Dinesh, and Satish gathered for tea and a conversation, and their discussion veered towards the complexities of reservation policies.

Kailash kicked it off, "Have you guys been following the recent turmoil, the protests, rallies, sit-ins, and hunger strikes by doctors, medical students, and chemists? It's all about the reservations in these professions."

Dinesh chimed in, "It's disheartening, especially seeing the police lathi-charging unarmed protesters."

Satish added, "What's ironic is that these doctors provided first aid to the injured, yet the concerned minister showed no sympathy and even threatened to replace them."

Kailash shook his head, "And all this in the name of upholding the Law and the Constitution."

Dinesh continued, "The senior minister's delayed and solely oral consolation left the striking doctors dissatisfied. They remained unconvinced by the assurances."

Satish sighed, "The Supreme Court had to step in to end the strike eventually. While the protests ceased on the streets, the discontent still lingered within the doctors. Physical punishment can control the body but not the mind and soul."

Kailash pondered, "Why do such unpleasant situations arise? They shouldn't happen in the first place."

Dinesh agreed, "Absolutely, these situations could be avoided if someone sincerely addressed their root causes. But who will make that effort?"

Satish lamented, "The truth is that people are aware of the problems' origins, but self-interest clouds their vision. Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar initially recommended reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Parliament, limited to a maximum of 10 years. The expectation was that within this time, their financial and social conditions would improve. He cautioned against extending the reservation deadline beyond 10 years, deeming it harmful for the nation and its people."

Kailash questioned, "Why wasn't this implemented wholeheartedly?"

Satish explained, "They believed that retaining reservations served their vote bank politics, so, in the name of social justice, they repeatedly extended the reservation period, violating the Constitution."

Dinesh noted, "The country has been bearing the cost of this for the past 67 years. It has led to various forms of discontent among Bharatiya society, including envy, hatred, dissatisfaction, favouritism, torture, corruption, and apathy. It's also diminishing work skills and quality. In essence, it has become a reservation of problems."

Kailash expressed, "This undermines the very essence of equality, a fundamental principle of the Constitution."

Satish concurred, "Exactly, various forms of discrimination are emerging, rooted in caste, religious sect, and numerical categories. It's a heinous crime. But how do we solve this problem?"

Dinesh suggested, "The government must prioritize the welfare of all citizens while formulating policies, without sacrificing national interest for political party gains."

Kailash wondered, "But who will convey this to the ruling authorities, and how?"

Satish insisted, "It's now the responsibility of intellectuals. They must uncover the vested interests of pseudo-political leaders and raise public awareness. Leaders should be compelled to make decisions that align with long-term vision and the nation's interest. Controversial and debatable decisions should not be tolerated. You can't deceive the common man every time."

Dinesh remarked, "We have a substantial number of illiterate people. Even among those who are illiterate, very few are educated. Patriotism is waning."

Kailash added, "The situation is such that most citizens aren't even aware of their rights and responsibilities."

Satish emphasized, "The Constitution's foundation rests on providing citizens with basic necessities: life, health, medical treatment, education, employment, and safety. These are rights, and no one can deny them."

Dinesh lamented, "But how many people in our country can fight for these rights? They have to beg for them and often get dismissed. They remain puppets in the hands of political parties and their leaders. How long can they rely on attractive slogans and false promises?"

Kailash concluded, "We must change this dire situation. We need to raise awareness among the people, unite them, and bring about an intellectual revolution."

Satish asked, "Another revolution?"

Kailash clarified, "A real revolution isn't about riots, destruction, or chaos. We need an ideological shift, a change in values and behaviour. We have to foster patriotism and positivity."

Dinesh added, "I hope this dream becomes a reality soon."

Kailash assured, "It will, for sure. The sooner intellectuals, writers, journalists, social workers, capable teachers, and professors unite and start working towards this goal, the sooner we'll see positive results. Initiatives involving citizens' support tend to succeed, with long-lasting impact."

Dinesh concluded, "Satish, let's make a pledge. We'll commit our body, mind, and resources to elevate our nation on the global stage. We won't rest until we achieve our goals."

And with that, the friends sealed their pact, determined to work together for a brighter future.

Key Message Summary:

The conversation among friends Kailash, Dinesh, and Satish delves into the complexities of reservation policies in Bharat. The problem with reservation policies, particularly in education and professions, lies in

the protests, controversies, and disruptions they often generate, eroding the principle of meritocracy and leading to concerns about their prolonged duration and social divisions they may reinforce. The friends acknowledge the adverse impact on equality and the rise of various forms of discrimination. They emphasize the need for government policies that prioritize national welfare over political interests and call on intellectuals and citizens to create an intellectual revolution. Their conversation underscores the importance of raising awareness, fostering patriotism, and effecting positive change for a brighter future.

Understanding the Causes of Ragging and Its Remedies

The term 'ragging' is commonly associated with the harassment of first-year college or university students by their senior counterparts, often in the second year. Seniors sometimes justify these acts by claiming that they, too, endured ragging during their first year and that it's now the newcomers' turn. This has regrettably become an annual ritual. However, the attitude of seeking revenge from innocent new students must be put to an end, as it is not only wrong and absurd but also illegal.

Sadly, much like law and order issues in other areas, ragging is a problem often neglected on university campuses, particularly when a new term begins with fresh students. We frequently hear about students being forced to leave college or, in some tragic cases, resorting to suicide due to overwhelming frustration. How can we effectively combat this terrifying evil? While police occasionally intervene on college campuses, their actions often come too late, leaving satisfactory resolutions elusive.

To find an effective solution, we must first understand the root causes of this crime. In general, it is evident that a lack of moral education in our system is a contributing factor. A child's primary education begins at home, and if parents and guardians instil basic social etiquette in their children, along with primary and secondary schools incorporating moral education into their curricula, it can lead to more sensitive and better-mannered students. Mere literacy is not sufficient; true education must encompass cultural refinement. Achieving this requires

revising books and curricula to include education on these essential topics and training educators in these areas. Only then can we expect a significant shift in the overall environment, resulting in changes in student attitudes. Enacting laws alone is insufficient. In fact, if we succeed in developing students' character, the need for laws to control such crimes may become obsolete.

Before the commencement of each new session at colleges and universities, it is imperative that the principal, professors, and especially hostel management teams educate students about the negative consequences of ragging, as well as the institution's rules and regulations regarding it. Furthermore, they should explicitly warn second-year students against perpetuating the cycle of revenge that they themselves might have experienced. Once this ritual ceases, ragging will naturally come to an end.

After setting these preventive measures in place, it is crucial that rules are enforced rigorously. If violations occur, students, in collaboration with relevant authorities, must face appropriate penalties. Moreover, colleges should be made aware that their government grants can be suspended immediately for non-compliance, and in extreme cases, the institution's registration can be revoked.

Individuals tasked with ensuring the safety and well-being of new students must also be held accountable for any rule violations. Only by imposing these consequences can the true purpose of higher education be achieved.

To establish positive practices and a welcoming atmosphere, senior students should initiate get-togethers with newcomers, enabling them to get acquainted and feel comfortable within the institution. This not only fosters a sense of community but also enhances the reputation and brand image of the universities and colleges. Ragging can be completely eradicated by harnessing the educational influence of senior students in a psychologically appropriate manner.

In conclusion, addressing the scourge of ragging necessitates a multi-faceted approach that includes moral education, strict enforcement of rules, and fostering a welcoming campus environment. By taking these steps, educational institutions can eliminate this harmful tradition and create a safe and inclusive atmosphere for all students.

Key message:

Ragging poses a significant challenge in Bharatiya higher education, necessitating a comprehensive approach that includes moral education, stringent rule enforcement, and the cultivation of inclusive campus atmospheres. This article explores the pervasive issue of ragging in Bharatiya colleges and universities, shedding light on its severe repercussions, such as emotional distress and even student suicides. The root cause of this problem is attributed to the absence of moral education in the system, underlining the need to instil fundamental social etiquettes in children from a young age. Furthermore, the article advocates for rigorous rule enforcement, penalties for transgressors, and the promotion of welcoming campus environments through senior-student initiatives.



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The Power of Passion: Igniting Greatness and Leaving a Legacy

Passion, a powerful driving force that propels individuals towards their aspirations, holds great significance in achieving greatness. However, it is imperative to distinguish between passion and addiction, as the former brings forth positivity and universal benefits, while the latter leads down a path of darkness, causing stress and unhappiness to both oneself and those around.

When setting goals, it is prudent to undertake a rational analysis. Goals should not only benefit the individual but also contribute positively to society. Many passionate individuals are often labelled as "crazy" because, in their relentless pursuit of their objectives, they lose themselves to their passion. However, it's these passionate souls who truly understand the far-reaching benefits of their zeal, a sentiment appreciated only by fellow passionate individuals.

Passion signifies a state of mind akin to the path of life satisfaction mentioned in the Gita. In this state of ecstasy, passionate individuals

become impervious to external factors, be it weather, happiness, or criticism. They are unwavering in their focus on their goals, akin to a continuous song that resonates within them. While passionate people may be a rarity, they leave an enduring legacy, remembered even after their demise, as they inspire and lead generations.

One such passionate individual was Baijnath, known as Baiju Bawra, who immersed himself in classical music to the point of detachment from the world. Despite being labelled "the crazy man," he relentlessly honed his craft, even moving to a forest to pursue his passion. Eventually, he became a renowned vocalist, defeating the famous singer Tansen, earning respect that endures to this day.

Chanakya was another passionate figure who harboured intense hatred for King Nand and dedicated himself tirelessly to strategizing the king's downfall. His efforts culminated in Chanakya Niti, a political treatise still revered today. Passionate individuals possess such internal strength that no external force can deter them from their goals, not even the mightiest of obstacles.

Passion has driven numerous historical figures, including Alexander the Great, Goswami Tulsidas, Surdas, Meera Bai, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and Mahatma Gandhi. Each of them made significant contributions, with their unwavering commitment and dedication.

Passionate individuals are so consumed by their pursuits that they rarely fall ill. Unlike those who waste time in frivolous activities, passionate individuals remain fearless, hardworking, and healthy throughout their lives, unaffected by the passage of time.

The saying "First learn and be able, then only wish" emphasizes the importance of mastering one's craft before aspiring to greatness. Poets often draw metaphors from insects and birds like moths, Chakwa and Chakwi birds, Chaatak, and Bhavra, as these creatures exemplify obsession without utility. Unlike these creatures, passionate individuals, driven by a singular focus, contribute positively to society.

While many wise men have preached not to fear death, their teachings often fail to instil fearlessness when faced with mortality. In contrast, passionate individuals fear nothing, not even death itself, displaying unwavering determination in the face of adversity.

To emulate legendary figures like Lord Mrinrunjay and Lord Shiv Shankar, one must embrace passion. During the Veer Gatha Period,

people were prepared to embrace death for their ideals, driven by passion and intellectual pursuit rather than a disregard for life.

The first step toward becoming passionate is embracing "One single Thought." This means focusing on a singular goal, allowing individuals to channel all their efforts towards achieving it. Guru Dronacharya's archery test, in which Arjun's unwavering focus led to hitting the target, exemplifies the power of single-minded dedication.

In conclusion, passion is the driving force behind extraordinary achievements. Embracing passion, pursuing a well-thought-out goal, and dedicating oneself to it wholeheartedly are the hallmarks of those who leave an indelible mark on history. Passion is the key to a life filled with purpose and fulfilment.

Key message:

The key message of this article is that passion is a powerful and transformative force that drives individuals to achieve remarkable feats. It emphasizes that being passionate about one's goals is different from being addicted, and that passion can bring about positive change not only in the lives of individuals but also for society as a whole. The article illustrates this message through stories of passionate individuals like Baiju Bawra, Chanakya, Alexander, Tulsidas, Surdas, Meera Bai, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and Mahatma Gandhi, who left a lasting impact on the world through their unwavering dedication to their goals. The article also highlights the importance of focus and dedication in achieving one's goals and becoming a source of inspiration for others.

Real names of some popular personalities

Known as	Real Name
Ajatshatru	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Bharat Kokila / Nightingale of India	Sarojini Naidu
Bhishm Pitamah	Devrat
Gurudev	Ravindranath Tagore
Lahurpurush / Iron Man of India	Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel
Lal, Bal, Pal	Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal
Lokmanya Tilak	Keshav Gangadhar Tilak
Loknayak	Jayprakash Narayan
Mahamana	Madan Mohan Malviya
Munshi Premchand	Dhanpat Rai
Punjab Kesri	Lala Lajpat Rai
Ramakrishna Paramhansa	Gadadhar Chattopadhyay
Rana Sanga	Sangram Singh
Rani Lakshmibai	Manikarnika (Manu)
Shahid-e-azam / Prince of martyrs	Bhagat Singh
Swami Vivekananda	Narendra Nath Datta
Tansen	Ramtanu Pandey
Tatya Tope	Ramchandra Panduranga
Tulsidas	Rambola
Valmiki / Adikavi / First Poet	Ratnakar, Agni Sharma
Vinoba Bhave	Vinayak Narahari Bhave

Preserving our Cultural Identity: Sanskrit and Regional Languages

It is a historical fact that when Turkish, Arabic, and Mughal traders arrived on the banks of the Sindhu River for business, they referred to it as the "Hindu Dariya" due to difficulties with their dialects. As they settled in the region, they began to call the local residents 'Hindvi,' which later evolved into 'Hindu.' It's essential to note that 'Hindu' is not a caste but a regional identifier. Over time, residents were categorized as Hindu, Muslim, and Christians, perpetuating the classification into various castes and sub-castes, which unfortunately continues to this day.

The local language of the region, which was a blend of many languages, came to be known as Hindi. The language used by the traders' staff to purchase various items, a mix of their mother tongue and the local language, was called Urdu. The language that incorporated less of the local language and more of their mother tongue was referred to as "Urdu-e-Alia." The region itself was known as Hind or Hindustan. When British traders arrived, they named the river 'Indus River' and gave the country the name 'India,' and its inhabitants were called Indians. Regrettably, even after 67 years of so-called independence, the country continues to be called India, and many take pride in speaking English rather than their local regional languages and mother tongues. Children are sent to English-medium schools, and people feel ashamed to converse in our national language, Hindi, or their mother tongues. Learning and speaking other languages is not wrong, but neglecting one's own language or feeling

ashamed of it and adopting another language is not desirable.

Urdu is written in the Arabic script, while Hindi is written in the Devanagari script. As a phonetic language, Arabic letters are expressed in Devanagari using dots with the alphabets, such as क़ख़ग़ज़, etc.

Here, we will provide an example of a sentence in the divine language Sanskrit in various languages and observe their similarities and differences. The sentence is "Idam Sanskritasya Bhashayaah sadharnam vakyam asti," which translates as follows:

Bharati (Hindi): "Ye Sanskrit Bhasha ka ek sadharan vakya hai."

Punjabi: "Ae Sanskrit Bhasha wich ik sadharan bakya."

Bangla: "Sanskrit Bhashayein eharek tho matro sadharan vakya."

Asami: "Sanskrit Bhasha ye ei kothay sadharan vakya."

Gujarati: "Sanskrit Bhashani aa ek shadharan vakya che."

Marathi: "Sanskrit Bhasha Teel hey ek sadharan vakya ahe."

Kannad: "Idi Sanskrit Bhasha lee yoka atyant sadharen vakya."

Malayalam: "Sanskrit Bhashalaad ori sadharan vakya."

Tamil: "Idam Sanskrit Bhasha lee vandu sadharan vakyam asti."

Telugu: "Sanskrit Bhasha Lo Idi Oka sadharan vakyam undi."

Pure Urdu: "Sanskrit Zuban ka ye ek Mamuli Jumla hai."

English: "This is an ordinary sentence of Sanskrit language."

According to published research, Sanskrit is the oldest and richest language in the world, comprising 100 million words due to compounding and derivation, while Hindi and English have about 150,000 to 200,000 words each.

In conclusion, we observe that there is a significant resemblance among our regional languages, but they are vastly different from Urdu and English. The Mughals enforced Urdu while the British imposed and promoted the English language, making it mandatory for employment and economic success. We must seriously contemplate which culture and language we should nurture and promote. Nowadays, there is a common practice of blending Hindi with Urdu and English words. Instead of addressing parents as "Mataji and Pitaji," people refer to them as "Mummy-Papa" or "Mom-Dad." Other common usages include "Nawaze gaye" instead of "Sammanit Huye," "Ishq" for

"Prem," "Ijazat" for "Agya," and using phrases like "Happy Holi" for regional festivals, among others.

In essence, by calling our country "Bharat," our national language "Bharati," and its people "Bhartiya," we can foster a stronger sense of patriotism, unity, organization, and overall well-being.

Key message:

The key message that the author is communicating in this article revolves around the importance of preserving cultural identity through the recognition and promotion of Sanskrit and regional languages in Bharat. The author emphasizes that these languages are not just linguistic tools but also integral components of the country's rich heritage. He argues against the neglect of local languages in favour of English and advocates for a stronger sense of national pride and unity by embracing and celebrating the linguistic diversity within the nation. Ultimately, the author calls for a collective effort to maintain and nurture Bharat's cultural and linguistic roots, as a means to ensure a more harmonious and culturally enriched society.



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Namaste: Exploring the Significance of our Timeless Greeting

Vineet's residence, situated along the path to Gandhi Udyan, was the backdrop for a conversation between friends. Ashish, accompanied by his friend Vivek, curiously inquired about the gentleman seated on the resting chair, presiding over what appeared to be a miniature court.

Vineet replied, "He's an ex-MLA, and you'll hear an array of greetings from those who approach him – 'Ram Ram,' 'Jai Sri Krishna,' 'Jai Sai,' 'Sat Sri Akal,' 'Saheb Ji,' 'Kem Cho?,' 'Maja Ma?,' 'Salaam,' 'Adab,' 'Kasa Kai?,' and more."

Vivek chimed in, "Are you learning these various greetings at home, courtesy of your neighbours? Greeting people is a long-standing tradition for us."

Ashish pondered, "Do people also greet with 'Hello,' 'Hi,' 'Good morning,' and 'Good evening'?"

Vineet nodded, "Yes, sometimes, especially when modern (read Western) individuals are involved."

Ashish probed further, "Which greeting do you consider the best?"

Vivek responded thoughtfully, "The best greeting, according to great

minds worldwide, aligns with my belief. In 1893, Swami Vivekanand participated in World's Parliament of Religions. In the 1933 conference during one session, Pandit Ayodhya Prasad ji eloquently defined the Bharatiya greeting 'Namaste' as the world's finest."

Ashish pressed, "Could you explain that definition to us?"

Vivek obliged, "Namaste signifies, 'I sincerely pay respect from my soul to your virtuous soul.' It involves joining both hands, representing physical power, near the chest, over the heart, with the head bent touching the hands. One brings together one's head, heart and hands. With great politeness and a respectful bend of the head, signifying intellect and soul, one says 'Namaste.' It is a hygienic greeting and also a yoga mudra".

Vineet interjected, "Many people wave their hands over their heads when saying Namaste, without joining their hands."

Vivek asserted, "When offering greetings, adherence to recommended guidelines is essential. It not only demonstrates courtesy but also upholds discipline."

Ashish inquired, "How so?"

Vivek explained, "In the Police and Defence, saluting seniors is regulated. If they're not wearing a cap, they stand at attention. Failing to follow this ritual, saluting without headgear, incurs penalties, maintaining discipline."

Vineet added, "During parades and march-pasts, I've noticed leaders often take the salute informally without headgear."

Vivek concurred, "Exactly. Correct greeting etiquette must be taught. Namaste is a psychologically humane and universally accepted form of greeting, devoid of narrow-mindedness. It acknowledges people's virtues."

Ashish noted, "Lately, some people use 'Namaskar' instead of 'Namaste.' Any reason?"

Vivek elucidated, "In the land of Aryans (Aryavrat), Namaste was the prevalent greeting. Arya Samaj stressed its correct usage. However, British rule began in Bengal and the British disapproved of Arya Samaj, as Swami Dayanand openly proclaimed, 'Our rulers, good or bad, are always better than foreign rulers.' The use of Namaste was not allowed. Namskar and Namashkar started to be used."

Vineet sighed, "Even after more than half a century of independence, we still hear 'Namaskar' instead of 'Namaste' on our TV and radio. When will we rectify this?"

Vivek replied firmly, "We must realize our Bharatiya pride and foster an intellectual revolution. Instilling good manners and cultural values in future generations is crucial."

Ashish added, "Foreigners visiting Bharat often greet with 'Namaste' with folded hands. Even Air India hostesses use 'Namaste' on international flights; it's renowned worldwide."

Vineet observed, "You've seen Hindi news anchors wearing ties while saying 'Namaskar.' Does this indicate a lack of self-esteem and a slave mentality? This has led some villages to believe it's the national uniform."

Vivek urged, "We must reflect on this situation and ignite patriotism among our people."

The conversation continued, and eventually, Ashish concluded, "I enjoyed our time together. Until next time – Namaste."

Vineet and Vivek replied warmly, "We enjoyed it too. Please visit again soon. Namaste."

Key message:

In this article, the author conveys a compelling message centred on the profound significance of the traditional Bharatiya greeting, "Namaste." Through a conversation between friends, the author emphasizes the timeless cultural value of this gesture, highlighting its depth and universality. The key message centres on the need to preserve and understand this age-old practice as a reflection of Bharatiya pride and cultural identity. By recounting the historical context of 'Namaste' and its elevation to the world's finest greeting by luminaries like Swami Vivekanand, the author underscores the importance of respecting and upholding this form of greeting as a symbol of humility, unity, and a connection between souls. Furthermore, the article calls for a collective realization of the need to safeguard traditional values and foster an intellectual revolution to ensure that 'Namaste' remains a fundamental part of Bharat's cultural heritage, transcending mere custom to reflect a deep sense of patriotism and respect for the virtues of humanity.

Dharm: A holistic way of life

Ashish had been hosting Swamiji, a respected saint, for a few days. Whenever Ashish and his younger brother had questions, they sought guidance from Swamiji.

Today, as they entered Swamiji's presence, he sat on a couch, holding a book. Ashish began, "Swamiji, may we have a moment of your time?" Swamiji warmly replied, "Of course, please come in. I've been awaiting your visit, and I'd like to gift you this book." Ashish recognized it immediately, saying, "This is 'Panchtantra,' written by Pt. Vishnu Sharma for children of a king who had deep love for animals. I've read the English translation." Swamiji nodded and explained, "Indeed, it's been translated into many languages worldwide. Many foreigners have honed their storytelling skills by reading it. Since both of you are proficient in Hindi and English, I recommend you read it. It imparts valuable moral lessons." Dinesh expressed gratitude, "Thank you; we'll certainly delve into it."

Curiosity prompted Ashish to revisit a previous conversation, "Swamiji, you once asked me for the Hindi synonym for 'Religion,' and I mentioned 'Dharm,' which is commonly accepted. However, you disagreed. Could you clarify?" Swamiji began unravelling the intricate distinction, "The precise meaning of 'religion' is 'sect.' 'Dharm' originates from the ancient Sanskrit language. The disparity between 'Dharm' and 'sect' is often lost on people."

Intrigued, Ashish inquired about the genesis of this confusion. Swamiji delved into history, "The root of this issue lies in England, where

becoming the King required membership in the Catholic Church, essentially making one a Christian. However, England had various religious sects. To ensure unity, the King declared his policies as 'secular' to accommodate all faiths. Our constitution also emphasizes 'secularism.' Unfortunately, this got lost in translation, as 'secular' should've been 'Panth-Nirpeksh' in Hindi, not 'Dharm-Nirpeksh.' The latter implies irreligiosity or atheism, a misconception that persists."

Ashish pondered why such corrections hadn't occurred over Bharat's 67 years of independence. Swamiji responded thoughtfully, "Just as you continue to refer Bharat as India, deeply ingrained habits persist. We've gained 'Swaraj' (self-rule), but 'Suraaj' (good governance) is yet to dawn, which will rectify many such errors."

Dinesh was keen to know how 'Suraaj' could be achieved, to which Swamiji replied, "Achieving 'Suraaj' requires a strong focus on education, culture, and values. This will trigger an intellectual revolution, fostering cultural awareness and dispelling confusion."

Returning to the primary question, Ashish sought Swamiji's insights on the distinction between 'religion' and 'sect'. Swamiji elaborated, "A 'Panth' (sect) denotes a path or way. Saints and monks founded sects, spreading their teachings. This led to numerous sects and castes, deepening societal divisions. 'Dharm,' on the other hand, is rooted in the Apaurusheya Vedas (Apaurusheya simply means 'unauthored' by a particular writer), signifying the act of adopting and practicing principles in daily life—a way of life. It embodies ten key attributes."

Requesting a simplified explanation, Ashish and Dinesh learned of these attributes of the 'way of life' through a Sanskrit mantra as per Manu Smriti:

“Dhrati Kshama Damah Asteyam Shouchamindriyanigrhah
Dhi vidya satyamakrodho dashakam dharmalakshanam”

Dhrati for unwavering courage, Kshama for forgiving grace, Damah for mindful restraint, Asteyam for unwavering integrity, Shouch for inner and outer purity, Indriya Nigrhah for disciplined senses, Dhi for discerning wisdom, Vidya for endless knowledge, Satyam for unwavering truth, and Akrodho for tranquil composure.

Swamiji elucidated, "These characteristics encapsulate the 'way of life' or path to inner strength, ethical living, and lifelong learning."

Inquisitive about whether sects also promoted virtuous qualities,

Swamiji affirmed, "Certainly, various sects emphasize non-violence, forgiveness, kindness, worship, aiding others, and faith. However, 'Dharm' offers a comprehensive, timeless, and holistic approach. It transcends time and place, embracing the unity of humankind—'Vasudev Kutumbakam.' It includes concepts of heaven and hell, fostering rationality, science, and psychology, devoid of hatred, blind faith, or ostentation, prioritizing spiritual growth."

Ashish expressed concern about people being misled by cunning individuals posing as righteous. Swamiji reassured them, "Throughout history, noble and deceitful people have coexisted. It's crucial to discern character accurately, requiring keen observation, analytical skills, wisdom, intelligence, practicality, and vision."

To better understand the criteria for such discernment, Dinesh inquired, and Swamiji offered a simple principle, "Evaluate individuals based on mutual gains or losses, respect or insult, life's joys or sorrows. Those in alignment are true friends or close relatives; others may not be genuine, warranting scrutiny."

Ashish acknowledged the challenge of identifying deceit, prompting Swamiji to cite the Mahabharata, where Sri Krishna advocated eliminating those siding with 'Adharma' to preserve 'Dharm'. Reflecting on the need for wise mentors, Swamiji cited examples like Chatrapati Shivaji, Swami Vivekananda, and Sardar Patel, who upheld 'Dharm' principles even in the modern era.

Curiosity then led them to explore the relationship between 'Dharm,' science, and the arts. Swamiji clarified, "While the arts offer clarity on How to perform tasks, Science informs us about the nature of things, the What, 'Dharm' explains Why, When, How much, and with Whom tasks should be undertaken. 'Dharm' provides well-defined standards, free from ostentation. "

Dinesh summarized, emphasizing the importance of wisdom alongside literacy, concluding that 'Dharm' encompasses these crucial facets. Swamiji appreciated their comprehension and humorously remarked, "At last, someone understands the true meaning of religion." Ashish and Dinesh, grateful for the enlightenment, pledged to share this knowledge, dispelling confusion. Swamiji blessed them, saying, "May you both have long lives".

Key message:

In this insightful article, the author conveys a profound message about the subtle yet crucial distinctions between religion and sects, using the dialogue between Ashish, his younger brother, and Swamiji, a venerable saint, as a vehicle for exploration. Through their discussion, the author emphasizes the need for a deeper understanding of these terms, shedding light on how linguistic nuances can shape our perception of fundamental concepts. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the enduring significance of 'Dharm,' a holistic way of life rooted in ancient wisdom, and its ability to transcend time, place, and divisive forces. By delving into the attributes of 'Dharm' and its compatibility with virtues promoted by various sects, the author underscores the importance of discernment in evaluating character, fostering wisdom, and embracing an inclusive perspective that bridges the gaps between diverse belief systems. Ultimately, the article imparts a message of enlightenment, encouraging readers to recognize the profound wisdom inherent in 'Dharm' and share this knowledge to dispel confusion and promote unity among humanity.

Unveiling the Significance of Traditional Rituals for Children

I was both surprised and amused when I first heard the advice: "Make the infant wear the waistband and shave his head, and his general irritation will go away." How could something as simple as a waistband and a head shave possibly calm a child?

However, my curiosity led me to witness the 'Mundan' ceremony for my younger brother's grandson. A barber was summoned, and the child's head was shaved, leaving a small tuft at the centre—a 'shikha,' resembling a pigtail, as Brahmins tie. Despite the toddler's protests and tears, the celebrations and mantras drowned out his cries.

Once, I observed foreign devotees of the Hare Ram Hare Krishna mission crossing the road, chanting and dancing to the beats of a Mridangam. Their shaved heads, adorned with tied pigtail-like strands, moved rhythmically with their dancing. It struck me that even foreigners embraced our culture and rituals, though the nuances were lost on a young child.

Another significant ceremony, Ear Piercing (Karn-Chedan), was planned alongside the Naam-karan (Naming ceremony) and Anna-prashan (grain-feeding). The child resisted and wept, but a stern warning prevailed: "You have to wear these earrings for some time; later, they can be removed." It was perplexing. On one hand, we chanted the Gayatri Mantra and prayed for wisdom, rationality, and knowledge; on the other, we endorsed such unscientific and autocratic superstitions. Answers eluded me.

Then, I stumbled upon a report about a conference held at "The

International Institute of Acupuncture" in Beijing, published in "Dainik Navbharat." Dr. Kumar K. Singh, our Bhartiya representative, had presented a research paper. It revealed that inserting thin needles into specific points on the human body had been used by our ancestors to cure diseases thousands of years ago. Even in the Mahabharat, Bhishma Pitamah's back was punctured at specific points to let him rest on a bed of arrows for 58 days, allowing him to choose his time of departure.

These ancient techniques could control blood pressure and even anger by inserting needles at particular points. In villages, piercings and tattoos were common, serving as a modified form of acupuncture. Leeches were used to draw out bad blood and cure ailments.

The significance of rituals like keeping a 'shikha' became clearer. This top lock of Brahmins served as a centre for controlling blood pressure and could improve eyesight and concentration. It was referred to as 'Bahui' in Chinese, meaning 'Boon.'

Ear piercings were not merely adornments; they could cure kidney ailments. Even in ancient times, kings wore earrings, recognizing their health benefits. Many foreigners also embraced ear piercings and earrings.

When a child turns five, an 'Upanayan Sanskar' is performed to publicly acknowledge the full development of their brain. They wear a sacred thread (Janeyu), symbolizing three debts they must repay in life—Dev Rin (towards Gods or Nature), Rishi Rin (towards Teachers), and Pitra Rin (towards Parents). This serves as a learning aid, a constant reminder of these essential contributors to their development.

Ancient practices like monitoring blood pressure by rubbing the space between the thumb toe and the first toe were rooted in wisdom. Even wooden footwear (Khadaun) had health benefits. Toe rings (Bichua) helped control anger, and now even unmarried girls wear them for the same benefits.

Bhartiya jewellery is not just about adornment; it holds health-related utility. Gold and ivory bangles, 'Rudraksh' malas, pearls, and rubies all have their significance. Understanding the scientific aspects of these rituals can dispel superstitions and provide rational answers to our questions. While there are 16 main Sanskars, I've discussed only a few here.

Key message:

The author conveys a message of re-evaluating traditional rituals for children in this article. Through a personal narrative, the author explores various customs such as head-shaving, ear-piercing, and sacred threads, initially perplexed by their purpose. As the article unfolds, the author sheds light on the potential scientific reasoning behind these rituals, drawing parallels to acupuncture and ancient healing practices. The key message is to encourage readers to embrace a more profound understanding of these rituals, beyond mere superstitions, and appreciate their potential health and cultural significance. By delving into the scientific aspects, the author invites a rational exploration of age-old customs, advocating their preservation with new-found insights.

Yaksha's Queries: Quenching Thirst for Virtues and Ethics

Yudhisthir: This seems like an illusion. There is no wound on their bodies. Are they sleeping? There are no signs of even the enemy's footprints nearby. Could this be Duryodhan's conspiracy? Did he mix poison in the pond's water? But there is no change in the expressions of their faces, due to any discomfort, etc.

He bent down to touch the water.

Yaksha (Voice): Attention, Yudhisthir. Your brothers who came in search of water did not obey me and drank this water; you should not make the same mistake. This pond is under my jurisdiction. It is not poisonous, but I am the custodian of this pond. You can't even touch its water without my permission. If you want to quench your thirst, then you have to respond to my queries and quench my thirst for knowledge.

Yudhisthir: O king, I understand. Please ask your questions.

Yaksha: Under whose inspiration does the Sun rise every day?

Answer: Bhrahm (Divine God)'s inspiration.

Yaksha: Who accompanies humans?

Answer: Patience only accompanies humans all the time.

Yaksha: Which education or study of scripture can make a man wise?

Answer: There is no such education or scripture. Man can become wiser only by remaining in the company of great people.

Yaksha: What is heavier than the Earth?

Answer: The mother who keeps the child in her womb, is heavier than

the Earth.

Yaksha: Whose stature is higher than the Sky?

Answer: Father.

Yaksha: Who moves faster than air?

Answer: The mind.

Yaksha: What is more insignificant than the grass?

Answer: Worry.

Yaksha: Who is the right partner for the person who visits a foreign country?

Answer: Knowledge and wisdom.

Yaksha: Who is the right partner for the person who stays at home only?

Answer: Wife.

Yaksha: Who is the real companion for a dying old man?

Answer: Charity, because that is the only thing which accompanies the lonely soul after death.

Yaksha: Which is the biggest vessel?

Answer: Earth is the biggest vessel, which can hold everything.

Yaksha: What is happiness?

Answer: Happiness is what is founded on the principles of modesty and good character.

Yaksha: What needs to be sacrificed by a person to be loved by one and all?

Answer: When the person sacrifice pride that emerges out of arrogance.

Yaksha: What is that, when lost, does not cause any worry in the person?

Answer: Person's anger.

Yaksha: What is that thing, after losing which, the person becomes richer?

Answer: Person's greed.

Yaksha: Yudhishtir, tell very clearly and surely, does one have to be born in a Brahmin family to become a Brahmin? Does it depend on their birth, or education, or modest attitude?

Answer: One can't achieve 'Brahminism' just by taking birth in a

Brahmin family or having an education. Brahminism can be attained by modesty only. The one who is not modest can't be called a Brahmin, no matter how educated they might be. After getting the knowledge of all the four Vedas, if someone has bad character or is addicted to bad habits, they can't be called a Brahmin and should be considered inferior.

Yaksha: What is the biggest wonder in the world?

Answer: Some people want to remain immortal, despite seeing everyone's death in front of their eyes, and this is the biggest wonder.

After several more questions and answers...

Yaksha: O King, I am satisfied with your answers. I can give life to one of your dead brothers. You tell me your preference, and I will bring him to life.

Yudhisthir: I recommend the one with wheatish complexion, lotus-like eyes, broad-chested, having long arms, and who is lying like a 'Tamaal' Tree. He is my youngest brother Nakul. Please give life to him.

After listening to this from Yudhisthir, Yaksha appeared in front of him, in person, and asked him this question.

Yaksha: "Why did you not choose Bheem, who is as powerful as ten elephants? I heard that you love Bheem the most. You could have also chosen Arjun, who saved you because of his skills in the battlefield. Why did you choose Nakul, leaving your other brothers?"

Yudhisthir: "O the King of Yaksha. Neither Bheem, nor Arjun can save a person. A person is saved only by Dharm. And if the person refuses to follow Dharm, then the person is destroyed. I wanted Nakul to be alive because my father had two wives, Kunti and Maadri. I am a son of Kunti, like Bheem and Arjun. I thought Nakul, one son of Maadri should also live, so that there is a balance between the two wives of my father. That is the reason I requested for Nakul."

Yaksha: "O my unbiased son, Yudhisthir. May all your four brothers be alive."

In fact, the Yaksha was none other than Dharmraj himself.

Key message:

The key message of this article is a profound exploration of morality, wisdom, and the essence of human existence. Through a captivating

dialogue between Yudhisthir and the enigmatic Yaksha, the author delves into the importance of virtues like patience, humility, and compassion in a person's life. The central theme underscores that one's social or educational status does not define their character, emphasizing the significance of modesty. The article imparts timeless lessons, highlighting the supremacy of righteousness and ethics over material wealth and power. Ultimately, it underscores the enduring value of virtue and wisdom in navigating life's complexities.



28

Incomplete Prayer: Embracing the Essence of Fire Worship

The tranquil ambience of the household temple was disrupted by the vexed exclamation of the family patriarch, who had just come to perform the morning prayer after his bath. "Oho, who has taken away the matchbox from here? I have to light the Agarbatti (incense stick) for the prayer," he grumbled aloud.

His young son, curious as ever, swiftly fetched the matchbox and posed a question that had been nagging him for some time. "Dear father, when you already have a zero-watt bulb lit the whole day and night, why do you have to light these Agarbattis, candle, and lamp separately?"

With a hint of impatience, the father replied, "You get good fragrance and some more light in the house. Without Agarbatti and lamp, the prayer is incomplete. Ok, now I am getting late for the office. You just go from here and don't trouble me."

The little child, though obediently retreating, remained perplexed by the answer—or lack thereof. Seeking clarification, he went to his mother, who was busy cooking in the kitchen. However, her response was no different, and she too sent him away.

This practice of lighting lamps and incense was not unique to their household. In the homes of the affluent, one could find grand brass lamps perpetually aglow with ghee, while others, despite not being devout idol-worshippers, engaged in rituals like 'yagna' and fumigation. These acts were customary during auspicious occasions and public event inaugurations.

The importance of fire in human history cannot be overstated. The discovery of fire was a pivotal moment in our development, and fire worship has persisted for thousands of years. "Agni Puran," one of the main Puranas, contains about 15,000 couplets, underlining the significance of fire. In ancient times, sixteen sages would conduct the Agnihotra Yagna over five days in front of a grand Agni-Kund. They would offer the fire a multitude of fragrant materials, flowers, dry fruits, and sweets. The benefits extended to those who inhaled the aromatic vapours and the purification of the environment.

The Parsi community maintained prayer places known as "Agiyari," where a sacred fire, fuelled by sandalwood, burned continuously. It was believed that this fire had been brought to Bharat by Persians who migrated. In modern times, a lit torch was often carried to sports events and remained ablaze until the competition's end. The connection between the English word "ignition" and the Sanskrit word "Agni" served as a reminder of fire's enduring importance.

But fire worship went beyond ritualistic practices; it was about embodying the virtues of fire itself. Fire symbolized not only light but also knowledge and wisdom, dispelling the darkness of ignorance. Its heat kept lethargy at bay, encouraging activity and vibrancy. Fire was a symbol of life, promoting growth and development. Its upward momentum and ability to spread represented boundless potential. Fire treated all substances equally, reducing them to their elemental components, remaining impartial to all. Fire was free from illusion, and its worship held true meaning only when its qualities were internalized into one's behaviour and attitudes.

Ignoring the questions of curious minds only revealed the worshipper's own ignorance.

Key message:

The author is conveying a message about the significance of fire in various cultural and religious contexts and its metaphorical importance in human life. The article emphasizes that the act of lighting incense sticks, candles, and lamps in religious rituals and daily prayers is not just a superficial tradition but a means to bring light, knowledge, and fragrance into one's life. Fire is portrayed as a symbol of wisdom, knowledge, and the vibrant force of life. The article encourages readers to understand the deeper meaning behind these rituals and to embrace the qualities of fire, such as illumination, warmth, and unbiased nature, in their own lives. Ultimately, it underscores the idea that true worship of fire goes beyond rituals; it involves adopting the positive qualities associated with fire to lead a more enlightened and purposeful life.



29

Embracing Tradition, One Cross-Legged Meal at a Time

"It is good that you met me here. I was going to your place," my friend said, as we crossed paths. "I am going for a feast at my Nanaji's (maternal Grandfather) place. Why don't you come along?"

"I won't be able to attend the feast, as my stomach is upset," I replied.

"First, you people take lots of fast-food, and then also do fast-eating. You are making your intestine do what your teeth are supposed to do. But don't worry. I will give you a surefire powder that will make you alright."

Curiosity piqued, I inquired, "If that is so, then let me join you. Which company has prepared the powder? Was that made by your Naniji (maternal Grandmother)?"

We reached Nanaji's place and saw a large number of people sitting on a long mat in a row in a big room. After the Yagna, there were arrangements for the feast. My friend hesitated as he was wearing a

tight trouser, "I won't be able to sit on the floor due to this. If I had known this, I would have worn a kurta-pajama."

"It's my fault. I should have told you about this earlier. But don't worry; Nanaji has also arranged a dining table and chairs for the people coming from outside. However, all the family members sit on the ground and keep the food on Chauki (a low-level mini table)."

Observing the dining room with a table with a rotating platform for the food items, chairs, plates, napkins, spoons, forks, and more, my friend remarked, "Now this is called the modern age. I'm not sure why people still stick to these old-fashioned traditions."

I handed him the powder and I continued, "Eating by sitting on a mat with a cross-legged position has several advantages. This makes the legs and knees stronger, improves digestion, strengthens the spinal cord, broadens the shoulders, and enhances concentration."

"But it is so difficult to sit in a 'Padmasan' (sitting cross-legged on the ground)," he retorted.

"Actually, it's not. With some practice, you would learn it very easily. Nowadays, just to get a little comfort, people take shortcuts for everything. In fact, the whole lifestyle is impacted. While eating in a 'Buffet' style, you hold the plate in one hand and eat with the other hand, while talking to others around you." I continued, "You would think I am giving you a lecture, right? Why were you planning to meet me at my house? Also, help yourself. Take some more food."

"Actually, tomorrow is the engagement ceremony of my elder brother. All are also invited for the lunch. Do come and join us."

"Oh, that is great. Congratulations. I will wear trousers and come."

"While eating at a dining table, there is no restriction on any type of attire. However, the benefits of eating on the floor were not known to me. Thanks for informing me about that."

I added, "Not just that, my Nanaji also says - your thinking is also affected by the food you take."

My friend exclaimed, "Besides the body, food also has some effect on the mind? I am hearing this for the first time."

"Why? Have you not heard, 'A healthy mind in a healthy body'? You will be surprised to know that the body is also affected by the cook's mindset at the time of preparation, the kind of vessels and gadgets

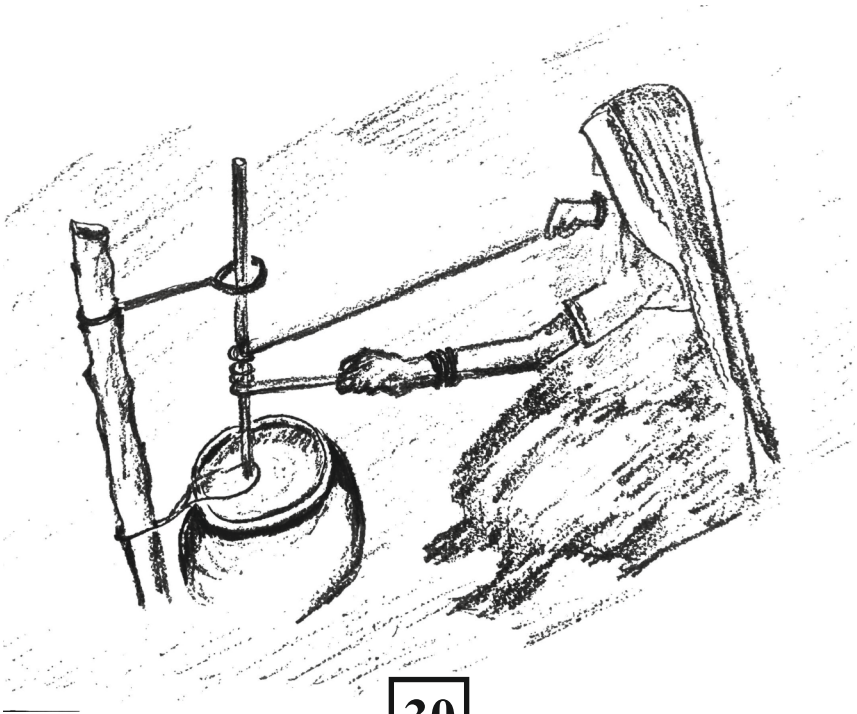
used, etc. This is a very wide field, and I don't want to bore you with that at the moment. Nanaji says, 'Using a knife and fork actually kills the taste of the food partially.'" "Western rituals are as per their culture and the climate and environment. We should not blindly following those. In fact, as science is developing, foreigners are adopting Vedic culture. Yoga and Ayurveda have already become very popular. Modernity and development are not just about focusing on products, clothes, and lifestyles, but also on our thoughts and culture. Do you agree with me?"

My friend nodded, "I do agree with you. The traditions we call 'old and useless' were actually developed by our Rishis after lots of research and experimentation, and those have a very strong scientific foundation. We only need to understand those. Your elders are keeping you updated on that, which is very nice to know. I am happy that you also explained some of these things to me. My coming here for the feast was greatly valuable to me. Thanks a lot. You too, visit us tomorrow."

"I won't miss attending such an auspicious occasion. We will meet tomorrow."

Key message:

In this article, the author emphasizes the importance of preserving and understanding age-old customs and traditions in the modern era. Through a dialogue between two friends, the narrative highlights the significance of a ritual like sitting on the floor to eat, emphasizing the profound impact this can have on physical and mental well-being. The author urges readers not to dismiss these traditions as out-dated but rather to recognize their scientific and cultural significance. Ultimately, the article underscores the idea that modernity and development should encompass not only material progress but also a deeper connection with one's cultural heritage and traditions.



30

Fitness Fusion: Bridging Tradition and Innovation

Puran had travelled from his small town to the bustling city of Mumbai to visit his friend Naveen, who resided in a posh area on the 8th floor of a multi-storey building. Upon his arrival, Puran chose the staircase rather than use the available elevator to reach Naveen's apartment. This choice surprised Naveen, who questioned Puran's decision and expressed concern about his friend's fatigue.

Puran explained, "I come from a small town where physical exertion is a way of life, so climbing stairs isn't a challenge for me."

Naveen offered to pick up Puran's luggage, but Puran had already checked into a nearby lodge near Mumbai Central Station. After enjoying tea together, they returned to the lodge to collect Puran's belongings. During the drive, Puran mentioned that walking and using stairs provided a natural form of exercise.

Naveen, an advocate of gym workouts, elaborated, "For a

comprehensive and scientific approach to fitness, I go to the Gym, where trained instructors guide us through exercises targeting every part of the body. They also monitor factors like weight, calories, and fat."

Puran held a different perspective, suggesting, "Gyms are mere displays of wealth and status. I believe that staying active without these facilities is sufficient."

Naveen countered, "Gyms employ modern equipment to ensure effective workouts. Once you see them, you'll understand their value."

On their way home, they discussed life in smaller towns. The following day, they visited the Gym, a grand air-conditioned facility with modern exercise machines and, to Puran's surprise, a section dedicated to traditional exercise equipment like heavy ropes, churning sticks, grinding stones, and spinning wheels.

Puran remarked, "This Gym is a fusion of the old and the new. In our villages, we use similar tools daily for household chores and for fresher, purer food."

Naveen concurred, saying, "In cities, convenience is essential due to busy schedules. Modern kitchen gadgets like mixers, grinders, and microwave ovens complement the urban lifestyle."

Puran humorously noted, "City dwellers often eat out and then hit the Gym to shed the extra pounds gained from restaurant food. It's the city culture."

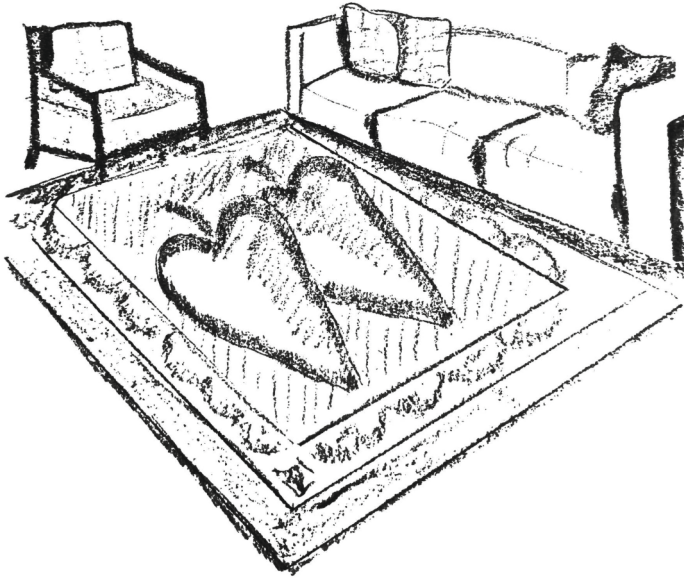
Naveen concluded, "In essence, good food and exercise are vital for health. Innovation arises from necessity, and while traditions and policies may be old, our approach to them can be fresh and contemporary."

Puran agreed, eager to continue their conversation at Naveen's home without dwelling solely on the debate.

Key message:

In this engaging narrative, the author delves into the dichotomy between traditional and modern approaches to exercise and lifestyle. Through the interactions between the characters, the article emphasizes the importance of adopting a balanced perspective that acknowledges the merits of both old and new practices. While modern

gyms offer advanced equipment for comprehensive workouts, the article suggests that traditional methods, deeply ingrained in rural life, can also provide physical fitness and a connection to simpler, more sustainable living. The fusion of old and new, as exemplified by the Gym's diverse exercise options, serves as a metaphor for the idea that embracing the wisdom of tradition alongside contemporary innovations can lead to a healthier, well-rounded lifestyle. The article encourages readers to appreciate the value of these dual influences and to find harmony in their approach to health and fitness.



31

An Expensive Carpet: A Short Story on the Triumph of Love and Sacrifice

"My dear Son, please get rid of the habit of chewing Paan (beetle leaf) and tobacco."

"I am trying seriously, Pitaji. I have already reduced it."

"You are taking a very long time to reduce. Now is the time for determination, and taking a vow to leave it."

"Pardon me, Pitaji, you too consume Paan and tobacco."

"I have suffered a lot because of this, that is the reason, I am advising you."

After this discussion, my father stopped consuming Paan and tobacco. But I could not get rid of that.

One day I noticed my wife immersed in reading a magazine, sitting in the veranda. I saw that she was reading an article on Oral Cancer and was also looking at the pictures provided there.

I asked her, "Are you watching my picture or my fate?"

She looked at me with a serious face and told, "Fate can be altered by putting some efforts on the solutions for the problems. You can read this, yourself."

"I am aware of all this, but unable to change the old habit. You must be worrying about the expensive carpet you brought getting spoiled due to Paan stains, isn't it?"

"I am not worried about the Carpet getting spoiled. This addiction has far more negative impacts than the minor pleasure you might derive out of it. I am more worried about your health. Pitaji has left this habit."

"Yes, yes, start telling me that this will spoil my teeth, intestines, clothes and the house etc. etc.", I responded.

I told her the long list of benefits of supari (betel nut), and how they are used in several holy traditions. Offering Paan to the guests is also considered a good courtesy. People crave for sweet Banarasi Paan, but only lucky ones get that. The white lime used is actually calcium. Qimam (liquid tobacco) has great flavour. It is actually considered a pride for the Nawabs (the Kings). There was a time when the size of the metallic Paandaan (the container, in which Paan and its other accessories were kept) was considered to be the social status of the person. Paandaan were also considered to be an important part of dowry in the marriages. "I think you are getting bored?"

"Not really. I was thinking that you are missing the Paandaan, but you can give a long lecture about chewing Paan."

"Yes, wise people recommend that people eat green leafy vegetables. I look forward to you singing the Hindi song ... 'Paan Khayen Saiyan Hamaro'."

"This is called self-glorification. Even the pictures of Gods and Goddesses on streets are not spared from the dirty paan stains. People even spit on the notice saying 'Spitting is banned.' Can you deny this reality? Am I wrong?"

"Oh, not at all. You can never say anything wrong." I said sarcastically. She threw the magazine on the table and started going away. I held her hand. At this, she said, "First you promise to get rid of this habit."

I explained to her, "I promised that even to Pitaji. It is an old habit, and I will take some more time to get off this. Forget the anger and bring me

a Paan and offer it to me with your delicate hands. It will be great for my mood."

She left like an obedient wife and after a while, brought two cups of tea, in a tray. I was surprised and said, "Alright, let us take the tea first then I will take Paan. Honestly dear, I am taking Tea, to give you company. You have imposed your habit on me." She was little embarrassed. In order to cajole her, I said, "Forget tea, I can even drink poison with pleasure!"

"You are a master of dialogues."

We used to have such fun often. It was also because our preferences and likes were quite different.

One night I came a bit late. I rang the doorbell. My wife, half-asleep, came to open the door. She looked at the paan stain on my new silk kurta and blasted me, "You have spoiled even this kurta." Then she said sarcastically, "Come in my Lord.", and she left to go and sleep in the bedroom. On the way she shouted, "The food is kept on the table."

Sensing her real angry mood, I went to the bathroom, washed my face, my hands and legs, took a pain-killer, and quietly lied down on our bed. Next day, as usual, she brought tea in a tray. When I turned towards her, she was shocked. She asked, "Why is your face swollen? What happened?" I tried to sit and explained, "I met with an accident last night and broke my teeth as well."

Hearing this, the tray with tea fell from her hands on the expensive carpet. She examined my hands and legs and asked me, "Did you take the anti-tetanus injection? I will call the doctor immediately, by grace of God, there are not many injuries."

I said, "Of course, I was spared of your scolding and the Paan. But see, you have spoiled the expensive Carpet." She said shyly, "I can sacrifice thousands of such Carpets, for your wellbeing. If you are safe, I am happy."

She helped me to sit down. I announced with conviction, "From today, I will not eat Paan & Tobacco at all."

She looked at me with a pleasant surprise and said, "Why this vow all of a sudden?" I said, "People get addicted to various bad habits, in absence of true love and when..." She interrupted me, "Ok if this is the matter, then I too will stop tea from now onwards."

I started laughing with pleasure, despite my pains. This was a never-before moment for us. This was the influence of true love.

Key message:

Trivia: This short story earned the author an award in a prominent newspaper's short story competition. This heart-warming short story is a testament to the power of love and sacrifice within a relationship. It highlights how genuine care and concern for a loved one can inspire profound change and motivate individuals to break free from harmful habits. The story illustrates that true love isn't just about grand gestures but also about making sacrifices for the well-being and happiness of the ones we hold dear. In the face of adversity, the couple in the story demonstrate that their love is strong enough to overcome obstacles, ultimately leading to personal transformation and a deeper bond between them.

The Tornado for the Old: A Satirical Journey Through Aging

Today, I find myself celebrating my sixtieth birthday, an occasion often marked with great fanfare. For the affluent and influential, it's a time of indulgence, sometimes even marked by artificially inflating their age to reach this milestone sooner. They revel in golden jubilees at fifty and diamond jubilees at seventy-five. It's almost as if a leader's sixtieth birthday is akin to a second birth, an opportunity to fulfil long-cherished desires.

However, I couldn't afford the luxury of an old-age home, so here I am, pondering the contrasting approaches to aging between the privileged and the destitute.

One guest confidently declared, "A person becomes wiser at sixty," a statement that left me envious. My face bore the weight of my envy, etching deeper lines into my skin. Perhaps he truly believed his words, explaining his youthful appearance. If only I had focused on a more balanced life, exercised, earned more, and bolstered my confidence, my situation might not be so pitiful. I've spent a lifetime caring too much about what others think, gradually distancing myself from people. Loneliness looms, and I depend on distant relatives for basic necessities like a beggar. They oblige only when they happen to see me. No one cares for my curses or blessings, as if they are immune to aging.

Each day introduces new challenges. My bed moved from the living room to a charpoy in the lobby, and eventually to the terrace with a mere mat on the ground. Here, I lie, coughing and reminiscing about

days gone by. The celebration today seems trivial. It's as though I'm experiencing a death in life.

As the years passed, my hair turned white, a reality I initially fought with fervour. I plucked the first gray hair I spotted, but more appeared, relentlessly. To hide my advancing age, I turned to hair dye, but my increasing wrinkles betrayed me. Lines etched onto my hands and face, my energy dwindled, and I resorted to using a walking stick, eroding my confidence.

Today, as they celebrate me, most people relish the passage of time. In my case, growing older feels like a loss. I once embraced the rapid pace of city life, but now, returning to the city after dwelling in villages and towns, I feel lost in the hustle and bustle of metropolises. I contributed little to the city, making it difficult to expect anything in return, leaving me perpetually despondent. The vigor of my youth, filled with energy and enthusiasm, has vanished. My plans used to come to fruition swiftly; urgency was my *modus operandi*. I fancied myself a Napoleon of sorts.

Today, I'm more like a polio-stricken patient, plagued by negative thoughts. Every pleasure seems like an arduous task, every small effort, a monumental risk. I've become entirely reliant on the kindness of those who provide life's basic necessities, particularly food. They say, "How can a food lover save money? He lacks the right company and guidance." While I once enjoyed good food, now I suffer due to it.

Tonics offer no respite; my eyesight deteriorates. It's as if all my energy has been redirected to my tongue, the one thing that refuses to wane is my temper. My snide remarks and foul language drive people away. Those I wish to approach flee from me. There appear to be only two paths left for me: embrace old age gracefully or defy life. The former is natural, while the latter is not. I'm torn between the two.

Someone once said, "Most people truly live only until fifty-five." Those destined to live beyond that age must do so as if they were demons in human form. Those who once pursued beauty, wealth, social status, and fame now, after sixty, resemble their distant ancestors — monkeys in appearance and owls in intellect.

Surviving until sixty-five means living like a beast of burden, and after seventy-five, it's akin to being a dog consigned to the yard. Though a human in name, I sleep like a dog, yearning for the end. Guests chatter

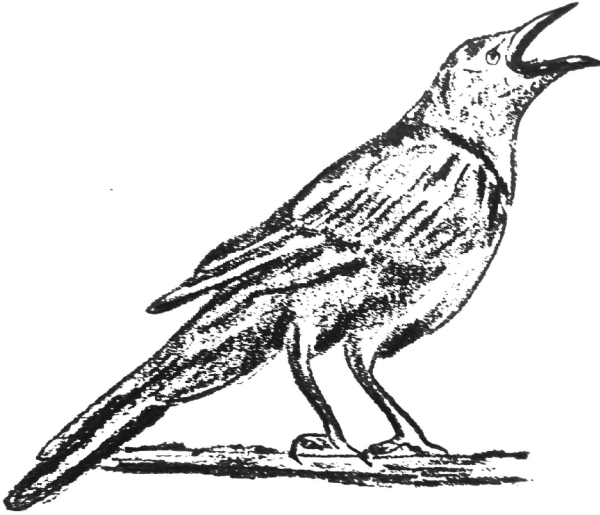
about current affairs while I dwell on the past.

Suddenly, my grand-daughter interrupts my reverie. She tells me, "Nanaji, Munna tore my kite." I promise to get her another kite, but she insists I scold Munna. After some theatrical scolding to placate her, they return to their games, and I resolve to become a more integral part of their lives. I'll spend my days solving their mundane problems, offering solace, and penning down my life's experiences for the benefit of others.

I've learned that even after sixty, one can find happiness by embracing various family roles like uncle, father, or elder relative. Today, I learned that dedicating one's time and life for the betterment of family and society after the age of sixty is a noble endeavour. An old-age home would only lead to more despair. I have made my choice.

Key message:

In this fictional story, the author takes readers on a reflective journey through the life of a sixty-year-old protagonist who is grappling with the challenges of aging. The central character, who feels isolated and regrets the choices made in youth, contemplates whether to embrace old age gracefully or defy it. Through this narrative, the author sheds light on the stark contrast between the aspirations of youth and the realities of growing old. The key message conveyed is the importance of dedicating one's life and time to family and society, finding contentment in simple joys, and appreciating the significance of familial roles and connections, even in the face of aging-related struggles. Ultimately, the story suggests that the true essence of life lies in meaningful relationships and the positive impact one can make on the lives of others.



33

The Bitter Truth: Intrinsic Challenges of Truthfulness

There's a famous Hindi proverb, "Jhoot Bole Kauva Kate". It's a stark reminder that dishonesty can lead to dire consequences. But what's intriguing is that sometimes, those who speak the truth find themselves facing adversity, particularly from those who resort to lies. Why does this happen? Let me delve into this complex dynamic.

Speaking the truth sounds simple enough—preach "Satyam vadam dharmamam char (Speak Truth and follow the Dharm)"—but living it is an entirely different challenge. It requires substantial self-control, unwavering conviction, sharp wisdom, profound moral strength, and enduring patience. Moreover, it often necessitates a readiness to make various sacrifices.

Throughout history, we've witnessed countless examples of individuals who stood firmly for the truth, even in the face of brutal consequences. Bhakt Prahalad, for instance, dared to speak the truth to his father Hiranyakashyapu, enduring severe punishments. His father showed no

mercy, and his courage in the face of adversity is a testament to the sacrifices made in the name of truth.

Socrates, too, paid the ultimate price for his commitment to the truth, forfeiting his life but never compromising his principles. Journalist Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Bhagat Singh, and Dayanand Saraswati are other luminaries who smiled in the face of death, all for the sake of truth. Their sacrifices serve as enduring beacons of inspiration, motivating generations to come.

It's often said that "Truth is bitter," and truly comprehending and internalizing it requires a range of qualities. Introversions, introspection, empathy for the truth-speaker's emotions and environment, and the ability to differentiate between good and bad characters are all part of the journey. Like bitter medicine, truth may not always be easy to swallow, but it ultimately leads to growth and positive change.

Constructive criticism plays a pivotal role in self-improvement. Embracing the mantra "Nindak neyare Rakhiye (Keep the critics close to you)" demonstrates the value of critics in our personal development. Additionally, wise policymakers have advocated policies like "Satyam Bruyat, Priyam Bruyat (Tell the truth, and tell that which is pleasing)" or maintaining silence in certain circumstances, acknowledging the nuanced nature of truth.

In the epic battle of Mahabharat, Lord SriKrishna employed strategic communication to break the Kauravas' morale. He named one of the Kauravas' elephants 'Ashwathama' (name of Dronacharya's son) and had it killed. Then, he declared loudly, "Ashwathama Hata" and continued in a hushed tone, "Iti Narova Kunjarova" (Ashwathama is dead ; uncertain if it's man or elephant). Lord Krishna's actions were underpinned by a profound mission—to save the Arya and uphold Dharma. They serve as a reminder that, beyond words and actions, the intent behind them holds paramount significance.

Indeed, grappling with the acrid taste of the bitter truth can pose a formidable challenge, but it's a challenge that holds immense value. Ultimately, the universal sentiment encapsulated by the notion of the 'bitter truth' transcends backgrounds and experiences, serving as a poignant reminder of truth's enduring significance, irrespective of the hardships it might entail.

Key message:

In this thought-provoking article, the author emphasizes the intrinsic challenges of upholding the virtue of truth in a world often marred by deception and falsehoods. Through historical and contemporary examples of individuals who unwaveringly adhered to truth despite daunting consequences, the author highlights the tremendous moral strength, conviction, and patience required to speak truth. The message resonates deeply, underscoring the value of truth, even when it's bitter, and how embracing constructive criticism can lead to personal growth. Ultimately, the author emphasizes the enduring importance of truth, highlighting the virtues of honesty and integrity as a timeless reminder.

**Presented here are select letters from
close literary associates of Shri Rajan Chowdhry,
who also became his very close friends, extending felicitations
on the occasion of his 90th birthday in 2014.
These heartfelt messages have been translated
from Hindi to English.**

Shri Rajan Chowdhry : A Legacy of Wisdom and Friendship

- VP Gupta, Retired Teacher and Journalist, Bijnor

In celebrating the 90th birth anniversary of my dear friend and mentor, Shri Rajan Chowdhry, words overflow to describe his remarkable character. With his gentle demeanour, devotion to Bharatiya culture, and boundless wisdom, Rajanji is a beacon of knowledge and compassion.

Born in 1924 in Nehtour, near Bijnor, UP, to a Tyagi zamindar family, Rajanji is the eldest of 13 siblings. His father, Shri Chowdhry Shurvir Singh, was not only an advocate but also a freedom fighter, deeply rooted in Arya Samaj. His mother, Smt. Suryakumari Chowdhry, was a woman of literature and spirituality, qualities reflected in her children.

Despite early responsibilities in the family's agricultural pursuits, Rajanji's thirst for knowledge was unquenchable. He pursued his education in arts and painting, later earning degrees in BA and teaching (BT) from Vardhamaan Degree College. His teaching career thrived at Raja Jwala Prasad Inter College, where he also excelled in organizing cultural programs.

Our friendship blossomed in 1957 when I joined the same college as a teacher, and over 56 years, our bond has remained unbreakable. Rajanji, a gifted writer and journalist, penned numerous articles on Bharatiya culture, festivals, traditions, rituals, religion, and moral values, many of which found their way into magazines and newspapers.

His educational expertise culminated in the creation of the "Topicictionary," English to Hindi topic-wise vocabulary dictionary benefiting teachers and students alike. Rajanji's wife, Dr. Gayatri Chowdhry (MBBS), embodies grace, goodwill, and a strong sense of service, undoubtedly contributing to his success. Their three children, Rohit, Vandana, and Rajeev, have upheld the family's values and maintaining a strong connection with their parents.

Despite living in different cities, Rajanji's heart forever resides in the simple, loving town of Bijnor, where he cherishes memories of guava gardens, soft carrots, and the warmth of community.

As we celebrate my dear elder brother's 90th birthday, I extend heartfelt wishes for his continued health, happiness, and a long, fulfilling life.

- VP Gupta

The Endearing Presence of Shri Rajan Chowdhry

- Dr. Radhyesham Shukla,
Editor of "Bhaswar Bharat", Hyderabad.

Describing someone so cherished is a daunting task, for how can words truly capture the essence of such a soul? Respected Rajanji, though age-wise akin to a father or uncle, extends love that makes me feel like a younger brother, and I hold him in the highest esteem. His very presence radiates joy. Undaunted by physical afflictions, he speaks of his ailments as if discussing another's misfortunes. Rajanji embodies grace and etiquette, bearing an air of aristocratic culture. His distinguished countenance boasts a dignified bearing, accentuated by his silver hair and ever-present radiant smile.

Hailing from an affluent family, Rajanji is a dedicated teacher with unwavering loyalty to the Hindi language, Bharatiya culture, and traditions. He firmly believes in the scientific essence of Bharatiya rituals and traditions, while his political and social outlook is staunchly nationalist and progressive. His writings on such topics frequently grace the pages of newspapers and magazines. His wife, a doctor by profession, shares his values wholeheartedly, a union seemingly crafted by destiny, evident in their children who uphold these same virtues.

Despite the inevitable effects of aging, Rajanji's mind and heart appear untouched by the passing years, exuding a perpetual youthful spirit. As he approaches his tenth decade of life, we fervently pray that his infectious zest for life continues to brighten the lives of his family, friends, and all who are fortunate to know him.

With warm compliments and deepest regards,

- Dr. Radhyesham Shukla.

Shri Rajan Chowdhry - A Devotee of the Nation and Language

- Chandramani Raghuvanshi,
Editor of "Bijnor Times", Bijnor.

Shri Rajan Chowdhry, the eldest son of the renowned freedom fighter Shri Chowdhry Shurvur Singh from Bijnor, UP, is a figure that evokes admiration and fondness. Despite the geographical distance that separates us, whenever I think of him, a radiant, gentle, and ever-smiling face graces my thoughts.

Our personal connection spans an impressive 49 years. He was my English lecturer at RJP Inter College when I was in the IX grade. Initially, our relationship was that of teacher and student, but the pages of my past unveil a significant moment from 1964 when he was teaching English. During class, he signalled for me to step out, and I obediently approached him. With concern, he asked, "Is your father in prison?" To which I replied in the affirmative. At that time, my father had been incarcerated for publishing a straightforward news article, "Bhukha Manav Kya Karega," in the Bijnor Times, under the DIR law.

Based on a foundation of trust, Shri Rajan Chowdhry advised me to have my mother file a bail application in the district court. He believed that the judge there was both reasonable and empathetic and would make the right decision regarding the bail application. I relayed this conversation to my mother, who, after consulting with lawyers, submitted a bail application to the district court. After a lengthy deliberation, my father, Shri Babu Singh Chouhan, was granted bail and released. This marked my first personal encounter with Shri Rajan Chowdhry.

Later that year, he secured a position as a teacher in a Mumbai-based school and relocated, momentarily disrupting our contact. However, whenever he visited Bijnor, he unfailingly met my father, thus keeping our connection intact. His younger brother, Vijay Vir Tyagi, affectionately known as "Munnu Chacha," played a significant role in editing the weekly editions of "Chingari," "Navrang," and the daily newspaper "Bijnor Times" through my father, Shri Babu Singh Chouhan, serving as a vital link between the Tyagi family and ours.

At my father's request, Shri Rajan Chowdhry regularly contributed his writings for publication in "Bijnor Times." His compositions are steeped in patriotism, a sentiment that resonates clearly, and he exhibits a

deep devotion to the Hindi language through his works. He authored an English-to-Hindi topic-wise dictionary titled "Topictionary" to aid students in their studies. His dedication to promoting the Hindi language is unwavering. In his letters, he eschews English numerals in favour of Hindi ones, and he has a penchant for employing the Panchang. These practices underscore his commitment to the national language, Hindi. Moreover, his articles staunchly uphold Bharatiya culture and tradition while resisting the influence of Western culture.

The Sanskrit adage, "Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gariyasi," which translates to "Your mother and your birthplace are superior even to heaven," seems tailor-made for him. Shri Rajan Chowdhry maintains an intimate connection with his roots. Despite spending three-quarters of his life far from Bijnor, he has never severed ties with his homeland. His writings exude an unmistakable affection, dedication, yearning, and devotion for Bijnor. This ardour for his birthplace is a rare quality, and he longs for Bijnor. Even today, the proud history of Bijnor never ceases to fascinate him. Whenever he writes about Bijnor, his heart swells with pride, his pulse quickens, and his senses are inundated with the nostalgic fragrance of his hometown. Given the opportunity, he would soar to Bijnor and traverse its streets, reminiscing about his childhood.

With these cherished memories, may he live over a century and consistently strive to benefit the society through his constructive thinking. He has enriched the treasury of the national language, Hindi, and stands as a guiding star in the literary world of Bijnor district. This is our heartfelt wish on behalf of the Bijnor Times.

- Chandramani Raghuvanshi.

Shri Rajan Chowdhry - A Beloved Bond

- Hitesh Kumar Sharma

Advocate, Poet, Writer, and Journalist, Bijnor.

Half a century ago, on my way to visit Pandit Dwarika Prasad Sharma, a learned Ved residing in Bukhara near Bijnor, I stumbled upon the house of Madan Choudhary. Though my intention was to acquire some medicines, what caught my eye was an enchanting visage, radiating brightness. It was the same face I had encountered in Hyderabad six years prior. I sensed the same vivacity, warmth, and that familiar smile – a rarity among acquaintances. Despite not engaging in a formal introduction back then, I knew him as the elder brother of my late friend, Vijay Vir Tyagi, who served as a connection.

I must extend heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Ramswarup Arya for facilitating our first telephonic conversation. That moment marked a turning point in my life, introducing me to Hyderabad and the close proximity of Shri Rajan Chowdhry. This proximity would prove to be a blessing, propelling me to unforeseen heights in the realm of literature. My journey owes much to my senior colleague, and in this odyssey, Dr. Arya stands as both my teacher and my guiding star.

I was elated by Shri Rajan Chowdhry's affectionate request for both Usha and me to visit Hyderabad. His love and affection have become increasingly rare in today's world. Whenever my writings grace the pages of a newspaper, he calls me without fail, offering praise, blessings, good wishes, and, most importantly, motivation. His words of encouragement serve as guiding lights and blessings in my life's path.

Our sojourn in Hyderabad was marked by the warmth and respect shown to us by my dear brother, respected sister-in-law, their son, daughter in law and grandson. Though I have experienced hospitality in many places, the love and respect we received during our stay in Hyderabad were truly unforgettable. During those days, my brother regaled us with stories and experiences of his beloved father, who was a freedom fighter. His narratives vividly conveyed the struggles and patriotic fervor that defined his father's life. These tales left us yearning for more, a testament to their power and impact.

For my entire life, I had been in search of a brother who could be my Ram, and in Shri Rajan Chowdhry, that quest found its culmination. The love and affection bestowed upon us by his family, are etched in our hearts, destined to transcend lifetimes.

Thanks to Rajanji, we were able to seek blessings at Shri Mallikarjun and embark on a pilgrimage to Tirupati Balaji. As our visit came to an end, our hearts were heavy with sorrow. We longed to extend our stay, but pressing obligations beckoned us back. As we bid our farewells, their son escorted us to the station. The warmth of that moment lingers in my memory.

Brother Rajanji continues to extend his invitations, and his affectionate words of appreciation never cease to pour in through our mobile phones. Not a week goes by without his call or his words of encouragement. We send our heartfelt wishes for abundant health and immense joy as we all celebrate his 90th birthday.

- Hitesh Kumar Sharma

Discover timeless wisdom reimaged for the New Generation.

Dive into the insightful world of Late Shri Rajan Chowdhry, whose works have been revitalized in this captivating English translation by Mrs. Sadhana Rastogi. Celebrating his 100th birth anniversary, these 33 articles bridge the past with the future, offering a fresh perspective on Bharatiya history, culture, and traditions for today's generation.

Why this collection is a must-read:

- **Contemporary take on traditional insights:** Explore a modern interpretation of our festivals, education, and patriotism, making ancient wisdom relevant and accessible to the new generation.
- **Legacy for the future:** Shri Rajan Chowdhry's teachings are not just historical narratives but a guide to navigating today's dynamic world, inspiring young minds to value and shape the future.
- **Engage and reflect:** Each article concludes with a 'Key Message', inviting you to delve deeper, challenge your thoughts, and discover personal meaning in these timeless ideas.

This collection bridges the gap between generations, encouraging young readers to embrace our rich heritage while shaping it to fit their vision of progress and change. Join in rediscovering the essence of our culture through the eyes of a visionary, beloved educator, journalist and writer.



Shri Rajan Chowdhry, born on 24th January 1924, was a dedicated educator and prolific writer. With a deep belief in youth empowerment, he influenced many through his teachings on Bharatiya history, culture, and language. He served in notable schools like St Andrews (Mumbai), Bombay International School, and Nasr School (Hyderabad). A national spirited journalist and author, he penned over 300 articles and published 'Topictionary', an

English-Hindi topic-wise dictionary. He also contributed to theatre, TV and radio. Continuously sharing his knowledge until the age of 91, he passed away in 2015, leaving behind a legacy of educational and cultural enrichment.