

Shravan in Gujarat

A. Narrative 1:

Gujarat celebrates numerous festivals throughout the year with high fervour, but the month of Shravan is considered to be highly auspicious and dedicated to Lord Shiva. For a number of Hindu communities the cycle of fasts (vrats) begin from this sacred month of Shravan. It is during this month devotees engross themselves in sacred and spiritual affair.

Every single day during this tenth month of the Gujarati calendar is considered to be extremely favourable, specifically the Shravan Mondays because the day is completely devoted to worshipping Lord Shiva. There are several different ways that devotees go about when it comes to fasting during Shravan. There are few who simply eat one meal per day, and few choose to eat only fruits and milk during this holy month. Just about every devotee of Lord Shiva follows a strict vegetarian diet.

Throughout the month of Shravan every single day is has a unique significance along with its own ritual, which continues to live to the present day. The entire state is enriched with tradition and customs which is strongly imbibed in each Gujarati family. First Sunday of Shravan is known for Veerpasli vrat that is continued for the next eight days, is believed for the wellbeing of the male members in the family.

In Gujarat, several girls fast from the first Monday of the Shravan month for next sixteen Mondays (Solah Somwar) so as to be blessed with a good spouse, happiness, and peaceful life. On the whole this entire month has different fast days i.e., Phool Kajali, Chokha Kajali and Gai Vrat, which is connected to the myths of marriage. During the month of Shravan the rain gods shower their blessings. Some researchers consider that fasting (varts) helps the people to stay hale and hearty because the waterborne infections spread too quickly.

Around this time nearly all Shiva temples are crowded as all devotees seek their Lord's blessings by making offerings and abhishekam (mixture of milk and water). The Shravan month brings along many great important festivals i.e., Nag Pancham, Shitala Satam, and Janmashtami.

Living in this amazingly cultural state where different traditions and rituals, developed by various sects i.e. individuals and idealistic institutions, in different situations and at different periods by our ancient still survive and encourage us improve ourselves.

B. Narrative 2

Shravan month of Hindu calendar has lot of significance worshipping Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. In Gujarat, the celebration of this month starts with Amavasya (previous month of Shravan) known as "Divaso". The word "Divaso" comes from the fact that Dipawali, the prime festival of India comes after 100 days from Divaso and around 100 festivals are celebrated and observed during this period. This is the reason for celebrating this day by offering sweet to the God. This is also a day where Gujarati start observing fast by taking meals just once in a day. The month ends with the celebration of "Somvati Amas" by cooking and offering "laddoos" to Lord Shiva.

Gujarati loves to cook and eat food and they do not even miss a single day where they can make a day unusual by eating some good stuff.

Style of worshipping Lord Krishna

You will feel and breathe very pious and religious air in Gujarat. You can find temples with "Shravan Jhoola" to pamper Lord Krishna who is known as "Controller of our life" in Hindu religion. This is also the month when Lord Krishna took birth. You can find "Shravan Jhoola" made from flowers, vegetables, fruits, dry fruits, toys, balloons, etc. The concept behind preparing various types of Jhoola is the faith that whatever you get or require in your life comes from the Almighty. So you should offer all such things that you want in your life to the controller of your life Lord Krishna.

Style of worshipping Lord Shiva

Hindu religion says that Goddess Parvati performed meditation to marry Lord Shiva during this month. She ate only fruits that were found in the jungle during her meditation. Finally, Lord Shiva blessed to marry her. Hence this month carry lot of significance worshipping Lord Shiva. It is a belief especially among unmarried girls that Lord Shiva gives blessings to get marry with ideal life partner if he is worshiped during this month. This is the reason people here take meals just once in a day and devoting maximum time praying God for well-being of their families. You can find lot of people in the temples of Lord Shiva performing pooja with madhurashtakam, chandan, flowers and bilvapatra.

Each of these items used in pooja has its own significance. Madhurashtakam also known as 'Panchamrit' is considered to be 'amrit' prepared from milk, curd, ghee, sugar and honey. Pooja is performed with Panchamrit to pray for the prosperity, wealth and healthy life. Another significant item that is included in pooja is 'Bilvapatra'. Lord Shiva loves 'Bilvapatra'. The belief prevails that 'Bilvapatra' is the group of three leaves symbolize Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva and offering it to Lord Shiva means to reducing sin that is made not only in this birth but in the life that you lead for last three births.

The temples are decorated with flowers and lighting. People of Gujarat prefer to spare time to visit temples daily and perform pooja standing in a queue holding the items required to perform pooja.

Celebration of major festivals in Shravan

There is a long list of festivals in this month typically celebrated by every Gujarati. The major festivals are Raksha bandhan, Bol Chauth, Naag Panchmi, Randhan Chhat, Shitla Satam, Janmashtami, Parna etc. Besides these festivals, married Hindu women perform various vrat like 'Dashama nu vrat', 'Jivantika nu vrat', 'Lakshmi Vrat', 'Putra da ekadashi', dedicated to different Goddesses. Each of these vrat has vrat katha associated describing significance and reason of performing the vrat. Perhaps, this may be difficult to accept the fact that how anyone can believe and observe so many vrat. But it is fact that Guju have so much astha in these vrat and puja even if they are leaving very modern life. The entire family gets involved in the celebration with their daily routine. You will find even working married women observing these vrat. And that is the culture and heritage of Gujarat.

Gujarati believe in liberal fasting in which they prefer to take "farari recipes". They love to cook and eat fasting food like chevda, pettis, buff vada, potato chips and fries along with various kinds of sweets. So "farari food" lovers have another reason to visit Gujarat in next Shravan. One can find even more number of items than the regular meals to eat during the fast. Rakshabandhan is the auspicious festival of this month celebrated by brother and sister by tying rakhi on brother hand and offering return gifts to sister. You can find heavy sale on men, women and kids outfits. If the sister is married then the gifts are offered to the entire family of the married sister. So you can find shopping mood with heavy seasonal discounts. According to current trend, people actually stock their clothes in this season to take advantage of heavy discounts.

The other main festival celebrated in this month starts from Bol Chauth to Parna. Most of the schools in Gujarat observe mini vacation of 6-7 days from Naag Panchami to Parna along with Saturday and Sunday. Children and youngsters of the family get together and plan day out carrying variety food to eat. If you are planning to travel Saurashtra region of Gujarat during this month, then you can also enjoy fun fairs during this mini vacation. The fun fair known as "lokmela" is held every year in Rajkot becomes prime source of enjoyment during this vacation. People living in nearby location specially come to Rajkot to enjoy this "lokmela".

C. Narrative 3

In Gujarat, Shravan is the month of Vrats and the Vrat cycle for many Hindu communities commences in Shravan. There are people who only take a single meal during the Shravan month. Strict vegetarian diet is followed by many. Some people read a particular holy scripture during the month.

- Mondays in Shravan month is dedicated to Lord Shiva and devout Hindus perform the Shravan Somvar Vrat and continue it on all Mondays in Sawan. Some people observe it for years on the Shravan month. Usually, Shravan somvar Vrat is observed to get a good husband or for the welfare and long life of husbands and for a peaceful and happy life. Some couples also observe the fasting for saving their sons and daughters from serious diseases.
- Fasting, pujas and rituals on Saturdays in Shravan month is observed to escape from the bad influence of Lord Shani
- Veerpasli is a vrat observed on the first Sunday of Shravan and is continued for next eight days for the welfare of male members in the family.
- Noli Nom is observed on the ninth day of Shravan by childless couples.
- Phool Kajali and Chokha Kajali are observed on the third day of waxing and waning phase of moon. This is for getting a good life partner and for a happy married life. Gai Vrat which is observed during the entire Shravan month is also to get a good husband.
- Bhe Bharas is another ritual observed on the 12th day of Sawan and is observed near a water body.
- Bol Choth is another important ritual observed by all the family members and it is for the welfare of cattle. People cook outside on the day.

- Other rituals that are observed in the month include Nag Pancham, Shitala Satam, and Randhan Chat.
- One of the most important festival in the month is the Sri Krishna Janmashtami.

There are just a few of the rituals that are observed in the holy month of Shravan. This is the month when Mother Nature nourishes with monsoon rains. All the lakes, ponds and rivers are full and there is green everywhere.

Some scholars are also of the opinion that it is during this period that waterborne diseases spread fast. So the numerous Vratas and rituals in the month are to keep people healthy.