



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

The Festival of New Crops

Dr. Soumen Rakshit Assistant Professor, Department of Bengali,
Gobinda Prasad Mahavidyalaya, Bankura, West Bengal, India

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the evolution of human civilization through the lens of agriculture and its accompanying rituals. By analyzing global harvest traditions—from the "grain-soul" concepts in James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* to regional Indian festivals like Pongal, Nabanna, and Bihu—the author illustrates a universal "peasant formula" of gratitude toward nature. These festivals transcend mere ritual, representing a profound psychological connection between human survival, spiritual devotion, and ecological harmony. Ultimately, the study highlights how the sacred treatment of new crops reflects an ancient, enduring wisdom that views food as the vital energy sustaining both the body and civilization.

Key words: Harvest Festivals, Agricultural Anthropology, Folk Traditions, Grain-Soul (Annamaya Kosha).

INTRODUCTION

Man became man from the day he learned to make crops. The image of human civilization is clearly visible in the form of the evolution of primitive man. This form of river-centric human civilization spread all over the world. Over a large period of time, ancient people in different parts of the world tried to grow crops. They tried to think of the future, to lead their lives in a happy family plan. That's how farming became important. Cultivation varies from country to country due to many reasons like weather, climate, and geography. But the principles of production of some major crops are almost the same.

For example, rain is essential for agriculture. In that case, ancient people used to worship that rain, that rain god. This practice is different in different countries. Even in different parts of India, frogs are married in different ways, while in some places vows are observed for rain. In Russia, water was poured from above to simulate natural rain. The Aztec community even sacrificed virgins to appease the rain god. As many such incidents are known, many customs are still visible when we look at the villages. In fact, in the ancient form of farming, a single formula of the world's peasant community emerged. That is why just as rain is necessary for farming, the common farmer's yearning for rain is also worth seeing. And this has long been enshrined in the rules and regulations of crop production. Even today, if we observe these rules and regulations properly, we will be able to observe the ancient form of farming and the ancient trend of human civilization and see how with the help of intelligence, hard work, enthusiasm, courage, patience, and devotion, people have been able to create a developed civilization.

However, there are many traditions and beliefs associated with it. If you look at Indian culture, you will see that. There is no limit to the happiness of the farmer when the cultivation is completed after every stage of crop production, i.e., when a new crop is produced. That joy is not unique—it is shared by all through a special annual festival. This tradition is also ancient. Because in this present-day harvest festival, there are many ancient traditions. But strangely it is true that the happiness of the farmer after the harvest, the happiness index is different from region to region, but the appeal of the farmer is the same. Here lies the ancient form of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

The concept of God is very old. This concept is applicable to all countries of the world. However, the form of its variation or identity varies from place to place. It is described in detail in James Frazer's *Golden Bough*, which also talks about magic. According to him, there are three levels of human belief and thought—magic, religion, and science. Today, people are at this stage. Therefore, in order to find the roots of the present-day tradition and culture, one has to get close to that magic. There are gods and goddesses here. At a later stage, they can also be recycled. In the present era of science, that reform is seen as science, at least some people try to see it that way. This is a complex system that is focused on agriculture and animal husbandry. In the present multicultural outlook, new indications are constantly appearing, but if we go to the bottom, it will be seen that agriculture and animal husbandry are the only truths related to human survival, and it is on this basis that man and his civilization have grown. Therefore, in different folk traditions, folk beliefs, and agricultural festivals, as miracles are observed in some cases, as well as god forms have been imported. Man has tried to invoke a particular power for his own needs under the cover of symbols. That effort is therefore captured at every stage of crop production.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

To examine the anthropological, psychological, and regional evolution of harvest festivals and crop-veneration across global and domestic agricultural traditions.

HYPOTHESIS

Harvest celebrations transcend localized structural differences, functioning under a universal "peasant formula" that links human survival, spiritual devotion, and environmental respect.

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL TRADITIONS

Somewhere in the tradition of all the harvest festivals of the world and the joyous ceremonies after the harvest, there seems to be a common thread. From James Frazer, we can borrow some of the ancient events and traditions, which have variations on the first harvest ceremonies of different peoples of the world. It has been the custom since ancient times to accept the new crop with ritual. It is also believed that the grain-soul is being consumed through food. So it's important. The Vedas and Upanishads of India have called this grain the energy that enters man by taking it from nature, and turns into bone-fun-being. *Annamaya kosha*, the vital cell, seems to have been invented from this concept. As a result, it must be treated with respect. To accept food in the Indian conception, one has to remember God, one has to sacrifice to God. That is why the ceremony before going to receive the new crop after its production is so important.

European Traditions

- **Sweden:** In Wermland, Sweden, housewives purify the last of their harvested flour into the shape of virgins and make bread with it. It is then served to the entire family. This virgin created is actually the spirit of the harvest. Perhaps it is better to say the main force than to say the soul. The energy that we take from the grain every day is the first grain energy after the harvest.
- **Scotland:** In Scotland, as in Sweden, bread is eaten in the form of a virgin woman. In fact, they think that the power of the grain goddess resides in this last grain. So the last grain is collected separately and bread is made from it and eaten.
- **France:** In La Palais, France, this event is held in a bigger way. There it is poured with flour. On the second day, the food is offered to the Sun God.

ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL INDIAN HARVEST FESTIVALS

The study outlines a comprehensive map of how variations of these festivals present themselves across the Indian subcontinent:

Festival Name	Region / Tribe	Primary Offerings / Customs	Timing
Pongal	Tamil Nadu, Diaspora	Overflowing earthen pots, bathing of cattle, bull-taming games.	Mid-January
Nuakhai	Odisha	Cooked new rice offered to deity first, arsa sweets.	August–September
Nabanna	West Bengal	New rice offerings accompanied by Pitha-pulli.	November–December
Wangala	Garos Tribe (Meghalaya, Nagaland, Assam)	Rice-based dishes, traditional rice beers, folk dances.	September–December
Lohri	North India (Punjab, Haryana)	Sesame seeds, jaggery, sugarcane offered to holy bonfire.	January
Mopin	Garos / Galos Tribes (Arunachal Pradesh)	White attire, Apung drink, Amin food, Popir dance.	March–April
Onam	Kerala	Floral decorations, delicious dishes (Rasam, Aviyal, Brown rice).	August–September
Magh Bihu	Assam	Meji structures of bamboo/straw, burning the old, cow honoring.	April

The oldest surviving literary work of Tamil Nadu, Sangam literature (200 AD), attests to the fact that the festival is very ancient. It is mentioned in 300 B.C.). The Chola dynasty made the festival more colourful.

In Assam, Bihu is a seven-day festival. The first day is Bhogali Uruka. On this day, everyone organizes a feast together and makes 'Meji' structures with bamboo, straw, etc. On the second day i.e. on the day of 'Magh Bihu', the fire is lit at night. This is how the new is invoked by burning all that is old. The third day is 'Cow Bihu'. On this day, cows and cattle directly associated with agriculture are bathed and decorated. They were also honoured. The fourth day is Manu Bihu. On this day, elders are honoured and blessed. On the fifth and sixth days of Kutum Bihu, similar greetings and various cultural programs and fairs are held. The last day is 'Chera Bihu'. The festival ended. The burnt maize is broken and its ashes are spread in the field as manure.

DISCUSSION

There are many such festivals in India. It is not only different from state to state, but also different within individual regions. Since India is an agricultural country, there is still a stream of festivals here. Only when looking for it do we see its original form. Here, the thought-consciousness of the people is greater than the rituals or customs. This is a collective thanksgiving to the powerful grain. Not only the grain goddesses or the grain spirits, but also those whose contribution in the production of grain and in the preparation of the grain with a little bit of stored energy from the various elements of nature is small to outstanding—all of them are given heartfelt thanks and respect.

That is why food prepared from the new grain is offered to the grain god first. When the energy from nature is included in the grain, the man makes an attempt to remain pure while bringing it home and receiving it into the body. From the day mankind began to cultivate grain, it is incredible, but true, that humans understood the importance of grain. He understood that this is the power of man, so it is necessary to respect it.

CONCLUSION

The question remains: are there sincere efforts to develop the whole body by concentrating that feeling of respect or the desire and energy to produce crops in the modern individuals of today? The underlying unity across these rituals points toward an ancestral blueprint of survival that values ecological balance and spiritual gratitude above simple consumption.

Limitations

- The textual focus draws heavily from classical anthropological texts which may benefit from expanded contemporary rural field surveys.
- The regional variance of specific minority sub-tribes within central India requires deeper documentation.

Suggestions for Future Research

- Future studies should investigate how rapid urbanization and climate variations are altering the structural practices of harvest festivals among younger generations of agrarian communities.

REFERENCES

1. Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Translated by Willard R. Trask. New York: Harcourt, 1959.
2. Frazer, James George. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. New York: Macmillan, 1922.
3. Malinowski, Bronisław. *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1948.
4. Tyler, Edward B. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*. London: John Murray, 1871.