

## Beneshwar Fair

### THE BIGGEST TRIBAL FAIR OF INDIA IN MEMORY OF SAINT MAOJI

The biggest tribal fair of India, Beneshwar Mela is held from Magh Shukla Ekadashi to Magh Shukla Poonima. The name Beneshwar is derived from the revered Shiva Linga which is kept in the Mahadev temple in Dungarpur. Beneshwar means the Master of the Delta in the local Vagdi language and this name was given to the Shiva Linga. The Beneshwar fair is held at a small delta ('ben' in Vagdi language) formed by the river Som and Mahi. The fair site is at a distance of 123 Kms. from Udaipur, 45 Kms. from Dungarpur and 53 Kms. from Banswara. One has to leave the main road, go to Sabla and then reach Beneshwar. About the origin of the ancient temple elder persons in Beneshwar say that long ago a cow used to come to the Shivalinga and offered her milk to the idol. On not getting milk the owner of the cow one day got angry. The next day he followed the cow and found it offering milk to the Shivalinga. The cow was frightened and ran away to escape from the wrath of its master. Its hoof struck the stone idol which was broken into five pieces and from then the damaged Shivalinga came to be worshipped and the practice continued.

A unique feature of Beneshwar Mela that is five hundred years old is the immersion of the ashes of the dead ones of the Vanvasis who had left the world in the preceding year. Due to their financial weakness, numerous tribals cannot afford to take the ashes to distant places like Haridwar, Kashi and Gaya and carry them to Beneshwar, the meeting point of three rivers Som, Mahi and Jakham.

The ashes of the dead per-

sons called 'phool' in local language are preserved in earthen pots. In case of communities in which the corpse is buried, nails and some hair are kept aside for immersion later on.

Generally, the rituals performed after death by Hindus are also followed by the tribals. They believe that the soul does not get 'moksha' and live in peace till the ashes are immersed at Beneshwardham. That is why the tribals wait eagerly for the fair.

Just before the fair, the family members gather together to get ready to leave with the earthen pot

water in a line. They take bath in navel deep water and facing south they leave the earthen pots on the surface of the water. The ritual 'phool padrana' signifies the last homage to the departed soul.

It is believed that with the immersion ceases the attraction of the soul with the mundane world and the journey to the other world commences. After the immersion, 'tarpan' is done by holding water in the palm and then letting it flow in the river. Water is offered to Sun god and then other gods are also worshipped. After coming out of the water, new

When the rituals are over, the tribals, light 'chulahs' on the rocks and sand of the Sangam and prepare dal-bati 'bakra', thick maize bread etc.

The present Beneshwar fair in its present form is in fact actually a merger of two fairs: one which was used to be held in honour of Beneshwar Mahadev (Lord Shiva) and another one which started after the construction of the Vishnu temple by Jankunwari daughter-in-law of Mavji, a highly revered saint considered to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

'darshan' and the new ones are 'initiated' by wearing a 'Kanthi' on the neck. A big attraction for the devotees is the performance of 'rasleela' by the 'sad' community. Songs related to the legends and preachings of Mavji are sung and heard with great enthusiasm. Also enjoyed are the songs about Maoji and Mehudi who are considered to be incarnations of Lord Krishna and Meera respectively. In the fair are also seen camps of several other saints and 'sadhus' where priests and devotees perform various rites and sing 'bhajans'.

A big attraction for the pilgrims is the huge annual 'mela bazar'. There is nothing that is not for sale in the market. With trinkets, traditional implements, jewellery etc., the fair has become a paradise for shopaholics. The large number of shops in the fair provide an opportunity for buying and selling of essential goods and fancy articles. There are bowls and containers made of local stone and several other metal work items that the fair is known for such as sickles, scythes and axe heads. There are several shops where one can even find weapons for sale like swords, spears but the most popular are the bow and arrow made out of bamboo in the traditional style, as archery is an integral part of the tribals and is the basic weapon for their safety and security.

The tribal way of celebration can be experienced here by participating in tribal dances peculiar to the region known as Gair and Ghoomer dances. Tribal sports like archery, Gida Dot similar to hockey, is a special tribal game.

The fair resounds with the gaiety of songs, folk dances, magic shows, animal shows and acrobatic feats. Adding to the excitement are the joy rides on merry-go-rounds and swings.

The fair is a great occasion to soak in the tribal culture of Rajasthan.

- Ashok Mathur



and call upon the souls to accompany them.

On the day preceding the fair, can be seen big groups of tribals going to the Sangam. The whole atmosphere becomes grave early in the morning when the tribals in large numbers start wailing that is called Dad Paadna.

The earthen pots wrapped in white cloth in the case of male and red in case of female are worshipped with flowers, 'Kumkum' etc. at the Sangam. Then led by the heir of the dead, other family members enter the

clothes are worn and other rituals are performed.

Sitting on their 'asans' on the islands of the Sangam, dry rocks, banks of the rivers, round stones and sandy spots can be seen Bhagats and Purohits who are called Garu or Gorji in local language. They perform rituals after spreading, small pieces of white and red cloth on the ground and making 'yantras' with rice and wheat grains, 'Kumkum', 'roll', 'haldi' etc. Some of the Vanvasis also get their heads fully shaved. They offer 'daan-dakshina' etc. to the Garu.

The devotees of Mavji, who gave the message of universal love for the whole humanity irrespective of caste and creed through devotion to Lord Krishna, bring his 16 cms silver idol riding a horse in a Palanquin from Maninda Math at Sabla to Beneshwar. The same day the Mahanta of this Math is taken for a dip in the waters of the 'Sangam' as it is believed that it makes the water holy. Then the 'Sangam Snan' for pilgrims begins. For the next five days, the Mahant stays in the Krishna Mandir where devotees have his

### By the way

#### Supermen Don't exist

I have been reading and writing articles on super women since many years.

People talk about super women who have extraordinary skills but we don't have supermen in society.

Superman is a famous fictional character but he is not my favourite one.

There are still thousands of males who are working but they don't do household jobs like working women. They feel bad when asked to prepare food or tea in women's absence.

It's always a low category job for them to be perfect in cleaning or cooking. No matter how educated their wives are, they don't want to cook food for family.

Rajais working in a MNC and his wife Sulbha is a bank officer. It's only Sulbha's duty to prepare breakfast and lunch.

Raja feels like a king who does not get time to iron his clothes.

Their son Krish is two years old. Sulbha does everything for Krish and leaves him to a crèche before going to office. Raja keeps calling her to bring his bag, shoes and tiffin etc.

Sulbha gets tired doing all these things alone. Raja's mother Kiran had never taught him to do work on his own. His father Samir was dependent on Kiran too. Sulbha got ill one day. Raja could not handle the situation because he did not had

experience in cooking or cleaning. He had to spend thousands on food and still he was unsatisfied with the food which he brought from different restaurants.

He had always felt that these things were inferior and did not need to be learnt.

After this incident he stopped criticising housewives. He started to learn from his wife to take care of his son and home.

But it will take some time to become perfect in everything.

It's the story of every single Indian home. Everyone wants to have super powers and our society give credit to women who are doing multiple things to run their homes.

They don't get salaries for their work. Some laws treat them as maids who have taken birth to do everything after marriage. People don't teach their sons to do anything. That is why supermen don't exist in our country.

Don't you think this is the time to break the rules. It's good to have superwomen but it would be equally good to see supermen doing small things to please their families. Their wives may relax and find sometime for themselves. Tell your sons to make tea or iron uniforms. This does not make them less than girls.

If girls can do this, boys can do this too. Their is no rocket science in cooking food or cleaning utensils. In 21st century equality must be the rule for our Indian society.

- Hritu Sodhi

### Janardan Rai Nagar Sanskriti Ratn Alankaran'



India. Dr. Joshi told that India is known and regarded for rich Cultural Heritage. Our deep respect for the human values will make India as Vishwaguru. Chancellor Prof. Balwant S. Jani, V.C. Prof Shiv Singh Sanrangdeot, Kulpramukh, Shri BL Gurjar, V.C. of Rajasthan University Prof. Rajeev Jain and Registrar Dr. Hemshakar Dadheech along with faculty members and guests were present on the occasion. I was fortunate to witness this happy occasion. (Revised)

Udaipur: Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, noted cultural activist and Member Secretary of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi was awarded 'Janaardan Rai Nagar Sanskriti Ratn Alankaran' by the Janardan Rai Nagar Rajasthan Vidyapeeth Deemed to be University for his contribution in conservation of Indian Art, Culture and Language and promoting Cultural heritage of

## Campaign for Empowerment of Hinduism

- Lalit Garg

The fund collection campaign going on across the country for the construction of a grand Shri Ram temple in Ayodhya is a mirror of social equality and harmony, while the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are also the medium of empowerment of Hinduism. Through this Vishwa Hindu Parishad is engaged in uniting and empowering Hindu society by eradicating the differentiation between high and low class, narrow thinking, selfishness and casteism.

Shri Ram temple construction has been an important phase for the RSS to achieve the goal of Hindu renaissance and cultural nationalism. Since independence, political disregard towards Hinduism and Hindu faith had increased. By the way, the medieval and special Muslim rulers demolished the Hindu temples and Hinduism in large quantities. The RSS and its associated organizations have been the only medium to awaken about the rich cultural values of Hindus among the people.

The rich history of Hinduism and their great kings has been ignored in the Indian education system. So it is our responsibility to awaken the Hindu communities and show respect about Hinduism. The RSS has gradually succeeded in creating these feelings within the people. The belief is being instilled in them that if the BJP remains in power, the path to the emancipation of the Hindu temples and faith will be smooth, not only the temples but also the agenda of Hindutva can be fulfilled.

The agenda of the RSS and the BJP includes the removal of Article 370 in Kashmir, the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code, prohibition of cow slaughter and the creation of laws intended to prevent love jihad, apart from the Shri Ram temple. A big issue is now the liberation of Shri Krishna's birthplace in Mathura and Shri Vishwanath in Kashi. The cases related to Mathura are pending before the court. The RSS wants that cases of small and big temples in different areas of Kashi Vishwanath and all over India should be brought in the courts, just like in Mathura. Hindutva faith and culture was brutally crushed from the very beginning, now the campaign to revive Hindutva culture by giving it dignity is going on. Hindus have been witnesses of the darkest night; they will not reach each other's threshold if they do not hold each other's hand. In the coming time under a positive environment, till the completion of the construction of the temple, such awareness campaigns and programs of Hindutva will be organized that will awaken the Hindutva consciousness within Hindus, including India. The RSS talks of Hindu Nation since its inception. After nine decades, the RSS has been able to establish itself as the largest organization in the world, the reason being clear policy, positive thinking, and culture-thinking and strengthening its roots.



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