

Religion of India

Editor

Dr. Ajay Singh Kushwah

Kripa Drishti Publications, Pune.

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Editor: **Dr. Ajay Singh Kushwah**

Author by: **Veena Anand**

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Mob: +91-8007068686

Email: editor@kdpublications.in

Web: <https://www.kdpublications.in>

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Chapter 1

History of Islam Rites Rituals Customs

1.1 Introduction:

Most historians believe that Islam originated in Mecca and Medina at the start of the 7th century approximately 600 years after Christianity came. The founder of Islam is Mohammed in full Abu al Qasim he was born in Mecca Arabia now (Saudi Arabia) in 570 on April 22nd and died on June 8th in 632 in Medina. Mohammed was called the messenger of God he spent his entire life in Mecca and Medina according to Islamic tradition Mohammed's father died before he was born and his mother died when he was a young child. He is said to have 14 wives during his lifetime. At the age of 40 he began to have divine revelations of Allah by 630 he had most of Arabia under one religion. He was first raised by his grandfather then by his uncle he belonged to poor family but. They were respectable their tribe name was Quraysh. His family was taking active part in politics and trade. Most of the tribes during that time were worshipping their own set of Gods that is they were polytheistic they were in the Arabian peninsula they were nomadic people who travelled across the desert trading their goods Mecca was an important trading Centre and also religious Centre home to many temples and worship places the most famous one is the Black Kaaba meaning cube in Arabic this was built by Abraham (Ibrahim to Muslims) and his son named Ismail it was considered that Allah was considered to be the greatest and the only one without an idol. The meaning of word Islam means submission to God Islam is an Arabic word. Mohammed worked for his uncle he learnt commercial trade and would often go to Syria he was very honest and sincere in his trade thus people who knew him named him al-Amin which means faithful or trustworthy. In his early 20s he worked for a wealthy merchant named Khadijah who was fifteen years older to him she liked him a lot thus married him they got several children but not all lived till adulthood but one named Fatima married Mohammed's cousin who said to become the successor of Mohammed. He was a very religious man he often used to go to religious places once during one of his pilgrimages in 610 he went to a cave named Mount Jabal al-Nour where he was meditating when an angel named Gabriel appeared before him this angel asked him to recite the name of the lord who creates man from a clot also he told him to recite that God is most generous these words became the main crux of the opening verses of the Quran he was first very disturbed by these revelations but later on did preach to his people the greatness of God named Allah but the Shia tradition states that he welcomed this revelation and preached it to the people or believers according to Islamic tradition the first believers were his wife Khadijah and his close friend Abu Bakr soon he got a small group of followers but most of the people of Mecca either didn't believe him or regarded him as just another prophet when people heard that he condemned idol worship and polytheism the traders started seeing him as a threat many people offered him incentives which he refused and continued his preaching there was so much resistance in Mecca that he and his followers had to migrate to Medina here he built his Muslim Community and gradually got more followers between 624 and 628 many battles were fought in the name of religion the most famous being the Battle of Trench and the Siege of Medina were Mohammed and his followers signed a treaty with the people of Mecca but this was broken within a year in 630.

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The Muslim army marched into Mecca taking the city but not many people were hurt Mohammed forgave all of them most of the population in Mecca converted to Muslims or Islam and then he proceeded to destroy all the idols of pagan Gods in and around the Kaaba.

When all the disputes were settled Mohammed took his pilgrimage in Mecca he delivered his last sermon in 632 in Mecca after visiting the Kaaba he then went back to Medina to his wives place he was sick for several days and died on June 8th 632 at the age of 62 and was buried at ai-Masjid an-Nabawi (the mosque of the prophet) one of the first built by Mohammed in Medina.

The home to Islam is Saudi Arabia this is also called the custodian of the two holy mosques namely Al-Masjid al-Haram in Mecca and Al-Masjid al-Nabawi in Medina modern kingdom of Saudi Arabia was built in 1932 by Mohammed bin Saud and his successors. The Saudi Government has spent billions of dollars in building mosques got from petroleum exports revenue to promote Islam. Oil was discovered in the Persian Gulf Region of Saudi Arabia in 1938 these oil wells were the largest source of crude oil in the world by 1970s by the wealth got from the oil resources the country's infrastructure grew transforming the educational systems also by 1976 they became the world's largest oil producers.

Islam plays a major role in the lives of Saudi people it is said that in Saudi Islam was a way of life it is said that Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic State its constitution being the Quran which is the Holy book of Islam and also practices the Sunni traditions Arabic is the language of the people of Saudi Arabia. This government also has a religious police force called the Haia. Their duty is to see that all people follow the Islamic laws and also to see that they do not practice witchcraft and black magic. These Islamic laws also forms the legal law system in Saudi Arabia.

It is said that Muslims don't believe that their religion started with Mohammed but with Jesus, David, Abraham (he is also referred to as the father of Islam), Noah and Adam whom they regard as prophets this is got from a book named Al-Tabari a work of historical and religious writings of Muslims before the First World War.

According to Islam God is the creator and ruler of the universe Islam is nothing but the submission and obedience to God or Allah according to Islam man only has the ability to think reason etc. To be born a Muslim he is supposed to obey Gods laws Islam is a monotheistic religion that is to believe in one God that is Allah. Islam is the second largest religion in the world the three holiest places of worship for them are Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. Islam also teaches that one who lives correctly and righteous will ultimately go to paradise people who don't do this will go to hell the Islamic Golden Age was from 8th century to 13th century. During this period of Abbasid Caliphate where cultural, economic flourished along with religion. Muslims have two sects namely Sunni and Shia. Islam follows a very simple concept that is God is only one and is called Allah.

Islam doesn't believe in polytheism that is the concept of numerous Gods they believe in only one God that is Allah this is a term where no plural or gender is attached nor does the God have a form but they believe in Angels it is a very common thing or basic thing this is because Mohammed received a revelation from an Angel called Gabriel.

This is written in the manuscript known as Jami-al-tawarikh by Rashid-al-Din-Hamadani these angels signify the revelations of God recording each person's actions when alive and to take his soul at the time of death. Just like in Christianity in Islam also angels are described with wings with supernatural elements who are supposed to be messengers of God according to Islam prophets are the people who are messengers of God who spread the message to one and all. In Islam Hadith means the words of God or Allah which are told or recited to common people. This Hadith also means commentaries of God and also doing good deeds like prayers, helping the needy people and compassion towards animals, birds etc if a person does all this it is believed that he or she will go to heaven or paradise. Failing to do so will make them go to hell.

The concept of divine rule plays a major role in a Muslim person's life by this we mean that whatever happens it is the will of God.

1.2 Rulebook of Islam Followed by All Muslims:

As a religion Islam also stresses the fact that people should follow the rules and regulations of Islam they should also have good deeds, righteousness and be of good character all Muslims should form one community this was known as ummah.

There was a rule book formed were by all the Muslims were supposed to follow:

- a. The security of the community
- b. Religious freedom
- c. The role of Medina as a sacred place (banning of all weapons and violence)
- d. The security of women
- e. Stable relation with Medina
- f. A tax system for supporting the community during times of conflict
- g. Parameters for political alliances
- h. A system of protecting individuals
- i. A judicial system for solving disputes where this could also be used by non-muslims they could also have their own judges and laws

By this we can see that Islam also follows a lot of laws and norms which has to be followed by all Muslims.

Islam in a span of hundred years spread from France to China Islam doesn't view itself as a new religion but as a subject of Judaism and Christianity Quran corrects the distortions of previous prophets their actual practices have changed over a period of time to suit that time and place. Islam was basically based on the beliefs of the five pillars which is the foundation of the Islam religion:

The first pillar was known as the **Shahadah** meaning the worship of God and Mohammed is his messenger and his testimony should be followed. The second pillar of Islam is **prayer** all Muslims are said to follow a certain kind of prayer which should be religiously followed by one and all the adults that is men and women they are supposed to pray five times a day. Morning, midday, afternoon, evening and after sunset.

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The third pillar of Islam is to **give alms or charity to people in need** this is called “Zakah”. The fourth pillar of Islam is **fasting during the entire lunar month of “Ramzan”** during this period adults are supposed to fast from dawn to sunset at this time they are even supposed to abstain from drink and sexual relations.

The fifth pillar of Islam is to go on a **pilgrimage to Mecca this is called “Hajj”** Mecca is supposed to be the first house of worship built by Prophet Adam and Eve later restored by Prophet Abraham and his son Prophet Ismael. Prophet Muhammed believed in one God thus he destroyed the 365 idols which were worshipped by the Arabs before the coming of Islam.

After the death of Muhammed two major sects came into existence known as the `Sunnis and Shiites the Sunnis make up for the 90% of the Muslim population they believe in the four caliphs whereas the Shiites believe in only one caliph that is Ali they believe that his descendants are the only true descendants of Prophet Muhammed. The Islamic calendar started from when Muhammed started his journey to Mecca with his followers in 622AD to Medina this calendar indicates the Islamic holidays and celebrations along with the inclusion of the fasting period during the time of Ramzan which occurs in the ninth month of the calendar. Islam has no particular symbol but the star and crescent is accepted universally as the Islamic symbol by muslims worldwide the color green is also associated with the muslims as Prophet Muhammad’s favorite color was green this color is mostly on the flags of Muslim countries. The Sharia law is the legal system of the Muslims this law monitors as how the Muslims should live the dos and don’ts it also specifies the dress codes the marriage laws and other moral principles for the Muslims if any crime is committed then the punishments are harsh. For example if a theft is committed then the persons hand is chopped off.

1.3 Islam Timeline Chart:

Islam is the world’s fastest growing religion the Quran provides its followers with the word of God the Sunna and Hadith show the path as to how to observe and include it in one’s daily life.

1.4 Islam Time Line Chart:

570CE Muhammed born in Mecca

610CE Enlightenment received by Muhammed in Mount Hira

622CE Establishment of the Islamic Calendar this was formed by the migration of Muhammed from Mecca to Medina with his followers this journey was called Hijra 624CE Muhammad’s victory in the battle of Badr as his forces won this was a turning point in Islam against the ruling tribe which was Quraysh.

625CE Battle of Uhud Quraysh tribe defeats the Muslims.

627CE Siege of Bani Qurayzah Muslims captured the Jews who had a stronghold.

627CE Battle of Trench Quraysh troops try to capture Medina but then lose to the Muslims force.

628CE Conquest of Khaybar oasis where they allowed the Jews to stay there provided they gave one third of their produce to the Muslims. 628CE Treaty of Hudaibiyyah signed by Muhammad's people and the people of Mecca for peace.

629CE Battle of Mut'ah Muslims tried to capture the village which was situated east of Jordan River from the Byzantine Empire to show their dominance but were defeated. 629CE First pilgrimage made by Prophet Muhammed and his followers after migrating to Medina they went to Mecca.

630CE Battle of Hunayn victory of Muslims over the Bedouin tribe of Hawazin.

630CE Unable to convert the people of Taif to Islam. 630CE Non-violent conquest of Mecca the Quraysh tribe realize that they are in minority thus allow the Muslims to capture their city.

632-633CE Ridda wars re-unification of the Arabian Peninsula to Islam.

632-634CE Abu Bakr becomes the first caliph successor of Prophet Muhammed of the Rashidun Caliphate. 632CE Prophet Muhammed dies.

634-644CE Umar ibn-Khattab succeeds Abu Bakr and becomes second caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate. 637CE Muslims conquer Mesopotamia. 637CE Byzantines are driven out from Levant.

644-656CE Uthman ibn Affan succeeds Umar to become the third caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate.

650CE Uthman orders one true Quran to the others due to variations in the previous Quran this change is followed throughout the Islamic empire even to this day the Quran modified by Uthman holds true so this was created and followed even today.

656-661CE Ali ibn Talib succeeds Uthman to become the fourth and last caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate. 670CE Hasan ibn Ali Shia Islam's second imam is poisoned to death his father Ali was the first imam. 680CE Husayn ibn Ali the third imam was beheaded by Yazid force at the battle of Karbala which is present day Iraq.

705-750CE fall of Umayyad Caliphate. 750CE Start of Abbasid Caliphate. 754-775CE Reign of Al-Mansur over the Abbasid Caliphate.

756CE Abd al-Rahman I over the Emirate of Cordoba. 784CE Abd al-Rahman begins construction of the Great Mosque of Cordoba.

788CE Death of Abd al-Rahman of Cordoba.

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1031CE fall of the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba.

1295CE Gazan the ruler of Ilkhanate converts to Islam.

1313-1341 Uzbeg rules the Golden Horde and makes Islam the state religion.

1400-1475CE Borobudur is left behind as Islam gains on the island of Java.

Thus, by this time line we can see what all events took place with the coming of the Islam religion. Now it's time to know the significance of the Kaaba and the history behind the Kaaba.

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Chapter 2

Rites, Rituals and Customs of Hinduism

2.1 Introduction:

2.1.1 Rites of Hinduism:

Just like all regions Hinduism also follow some rites right from the time of birth till we die Hindus also have many rites which they perform for the health of the person for the health of the family and so on. There are rites and rituals which one follows this happens in a very orderly way by which each stage of life there is a rite and ritual done this is collectively known as Samskara these are all followed for the ultimate goal in life that is Moksha which means liberation from births and death in this earth.

Birth Rites: As soon as the lady gets pregnant she does not tell anyone that is the job of the family members to tell everyone that she is pregnant and after that mostly her brothers or father take the pregnant lady to their house for the delivery but there is no hard and fast rule if she wants she can remain with her husband's people also. These religious rites start when the lady is pregnant, according to Hindu custom there is a mantra told for the expansion of one's lineage and one for the protection of the child when it is in the fetus itself this is called garbhadana which means conception. When the lady is three months pregnant there is a function called which is known as Punsavana meaning to protect the foetus. By this it is believed that a strong baby would be born. During the seventh month of pregnancy there is a function called Simantonnyana this function is equivalent to a baby shower which means to fulfil the wishes of the pregnant mother. This function which is performed helps the mental and physical development of the unborn child and also the health conditions of the mother. Once the child is born the function known as Jatakarma is performed where in the child is given honey by the family members and Gods name is recited in the child's ear by all the family members. As soon as the baby is born the time of birth of the child is noted down and on that basis the horoscope of the baby is written down this also determines when the other functions should be performed. This is followed by a Naming ceremony called Namakarna, the Nishkarmana the first time one takes the child out mostly the child is first taken to the temple for this the child should be 40 days old, this is so because the mother is said to be impure as she did not get her menses for nine months and after the baby is born only the bad blood goes from the body of the mother thus the whole house has to be purified the is usually done before the naming ceremony a priest is called and he then recite some mantras then he puts this holy water all over the house on the same day of the naming ceremony, this naming ceremony is usually performed on the 12th day of the birth of the child, in each sect the number of days as to when the child has to be taken out depends on the sects and then there is an Annaprasanam meaning first time to give the child solid food which is mainly first rice in the Hindu language Annam means rice, which is done this is usually done before the age of one or soon after the age of one before the child turns two. This function is usually takes place in the temple which is done by the family members. There is a grand feast where a grand lunch is served wherein close friends and relatives are called to grace the occasion.

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Then there is an ear piercing ceremony conducted known as Karnavedha and shaving of the head known as Mundan done. Ear piercing is said to have benefits of acupuncture usually the lower lobes of the ear are pierced. Shaving of the head determines that the impurities would disappear. These rites/rituals are performed on both boys and girls. When the child reaches the school going stage the Upanayana means the sacred thread ceremony is conducted for the boys this is usually performed for education this thread consists of three strands of thread one strand is for education one is for looking after the parents and the third is for the service to the society. The ways of performing the Upanayana would vary from each of the sects and sub-sects the basic rules being the same. Every Hindu definitely performs these ceremonies for the welfare of the child.

As the child only is the lineage to continue in the Hindu culture. The Hindus basically follow the patriarchal way that is the lineage of father to son but this is changed today there are equal rights given to girls unlike the olden times.

Marriage Rites/Rituals: In Hindu marriages the ceremonies may differ from north side weddings to south Indian weddings the main core of the rites and rituals may be same but some of the customs may differ.

2.2 Wedding Vows in Hinduism:

There are some common customs of the weddings and they are as follows:

- a. In all weddings the mantras which are recited are in Sanskrit as this is considered to be holy by all.
- b. In all weddings there is a Agni or fire which is lit, Agni is also referred to as a God and the couple seek the blessing of this God thus there is a yagna which is performed.
- c. They all follow the seven steps this means after the wedding the bride and groom take seven steps together this is termed as Saptapadi.
- d. Kanyadhan is done by the father of the bride in Hindus this is considered as the highest Dhana in this the father gives his daughter to the groom's family this means that after this Dhana the girl's side has no right over their daughter this is done in faith that the boy's family look after her as their own.
- e. Panigrahana: this is a ritual done in front of the fire where the groom takes the bride's hand to signify their union. This is usually performed after the Kanyadhana

This wedding signifies the coming together of the two families the bride's family and the groom's family many of the rituals performed are done by both the families there are a lot of fun in the marriage with a wide spread of the delicacies which are served during the marriage ceremony each sect has a different kind of menu mostly on the wedding day the lunch would be the traditional Indian dishes which are been served from time immemorable the north Indian menu would be totally different from the south Indian menu. The menu for the south Indian menu would usually be vegetarian. Before the wedding takes place there are many functions which are conducted some of them are fun-loving and all the members of the family participate that is of the girls and boys side, there is a mehndi function which is done before the wedding this is solely a ladies function but today everyone takes part in it.

The bride's hand is adorned with intricate mehndi designs both the parties that is of the boys and girls side all the ladies put mehndi on their hands now-a-days this is a function of joy and dance and they term this function as Sangeeth is on the same day of the, this function usually happens in the evening or it can be with the Sangeeth and mehndi, all the family members, relatives and close friends are invited to this function.

This function is kept to introduce both the families to each other.

There are many traditions which are not the same as the age old traditions like the girl sees her would be only on the wedding day before that she is not supposed to see the groom but these days this is not so before it was only the families which took the decision of the marriage because as the tradition goes the girl not only marries the boy but she is married to the whole family that is to say that she has to look after the whole family as her own this was because in the olden times it was that the family would be a joint family unlike today's nuclear family.

The wedding ceremonies are usually conducted in a mandap this is a place which is specially built for the sake of the marriage some conduct the marriage in a lavish way where as some conduct the marriage in a simple way according to one's financial position. In the previous day to the wedding the groom is brought in a procession by the boys side, in the north Indian style the groom usually comes on a horse and in the south Indian style the groom usually comes in a posh car which is decorated with flowers, after this procession both the bride and the groom exchange garlands to signify that they are committed to each other the occasion is a very joyous one.

In the modern times after the wedding there is a reception which kept this does not have any religious function it is usually a fun party where all the relatives and friends are invited other than the family members present and the relatives present the menu is also relaxed sort of a menu where all kinds of delicious dishes are kept.

In the olden days this reception was not there this is a modern concept which was introduced to make the marriage occasion more joyous. Marriage is said to be a lifelong commitment and bond to one another it is usually on the concept that they will not leave one another till the time they die but in today's way of life it can't be said that all couples stay with one another even after the long elaborate marriage functions. In the olden times there weren't much of separation between couples because for the fear of the society they would generally stay together even if they had difference of opinions among themselves.

This marriage was also known as Grishhashram meaning a family life. Marriage is a symbol of continuing the lineage of the Hindu family all the functions and customs which are done has a philosophical and spiritual meaning there are different kinds of Hindu weddings which have variations in the rituals and customs which are done for example in the South Indian style of wedding the traditional food cooked for lunch is usually served on a banana leaf whereas this is not so in a north Indian wedding. Many small customs vary but the main custom remains the same like the Kanyadhan of the bride. Another common ritual which both the families follow in a Hindu marriage is to have a pooja for Lord Ganesh before the commencement of the marriage.

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- **The most Important Rituals in any Hindu Wedding are:**

- a. Family traditions: Each family would have a set of traditions which has been followed by generations, to get the blessings of the higher power that is God. There is also different Gods or Goddesses that the family prays to. For example, some may pray to Lord Ganesh, some may pray to Lord Venkateshwara.
- b. Creating a sacred place: This is a must in all Hindu families the place is determined in a place around which four pillars are constructed this is called a mandap, some people build a raised platform, which actually represents a temple here the poojas are conducted.
- c. Lighting the sacred fire: This is done to ward off evil spirits and to get blessing from God for the couple who are going to get married. Also, to invite Lord Agni to grace the occasion and bless the bride and groom.
- d. Garland exchange: This is done to symbolize the union of the bride and the groom albeit the two families who would also be friends due to this union of the bride and groom.
- e. The seven steps: the bride and groom after they tie the knot of marriage they take these seven steps together to symbolize that they will be together for the rest of their lives.

Thus, these are the few rites and rituals of the Hindu style of wedding.

2.3 Rules and Regulations of Death Rites in Hinduism:

Just like rites/rituals of Hinduism there are many customs which are followed by the Hindus. This is one's last journey in life the Hindus also believe in life after death, they also believe in the law of karma which means that good deeds would be rewarded and bad deeds would be punished that is to say if you do good you would go to heaven and if your bad deeds are more than the good deeds then the person would go to hell this is termed as the law of Karma.

It is also believed that the soul at the time of death leaves one's body the belief of reincarnation is a very strong belief among the Hindus. Most of the rites performed is the same expect for slight variations in the rites and rituals.

Not all sects of Hindus practice cremation mostly all believe in cremation where as some sects believe in burial. Till the body reaches the cremation grounds the body remains in the family home.

- **They Basically Follow Three Main Rites/Rituals Namely:**

- a. Funeral in the family home
- b. A ceremony of the cremation/Burial
- c. A shraddha ceremony which is a ceremony which is done by the family members after ten or twelve days of a person passing away.

These are the three main things which take place. When a person dies it is said that the body should be disposed immediately the sooner the family members do it the better usually within a day the body is taken to the cremation ground.

At the home the body is given a bath, then water from the Ganga which is usually kept in a Hindu home in a sealed vessel this is then opened when a person dies, giving of this Ganga water makes the dead person pure, then there are particular mantras recited by the priest which normally would be recited by the eldest son of the family because the Hindus follow the patriarchal lineage system which goes from father to son. The eldest son has a bath before the cremation ritual. The body of the person if it is a widow then there is a white powder which is applied on the forehead, if the lady's husband is alive then the red Kumkum is applied on the forehead and the body is usually covered in a red cloth, if the adult is a widow then a white cloth is wrapped around the body after a bath. Then the body is taken to the cremation ground where the body is placed in such a way that the head faces the south then the son circles the body three times with an earthen pot, as he is going round the pyre a relative makes a hole in the pot with a knife this is done three times, this water which is broken near the head of the body, (this water which is carried is on the left shoulder), the body is placed on a dry wood pyre. The person is first given sesame seeds or puffed rice or raw rice, in the mouth the son then recites some mantra which the priests tell him to recite after this he that is the son goes around the body three times before breaking the earthen pot. The son then lights the pyre without looking. All the people who attend the cremation also give the rice or sesame to the dead person. After this the eldest son does the kapala kriya which means to break the skull of the deceased with a stick this signifies that the spirit is released from the body after this ceremony all the people who attend this go home and have a bath because the cremation is considered to pollute one. Once they are home after the bath a lamp and a pot of water is kept where the body was kept or in the same room. Only men go to the cremation grounds ladies are not allowed but these modern days even the women go and now many Hindus also use the electric cremation way to dispose the body but rituals which are performed the cremation remain the same. The next day when the body cools down the ashes are collected by the eldest son and then immersed in the river or sea. In some sects of the Hindus the men of the family shave their head, then there are religious ceremonies conducted by the priest for ten or twelve days it is said this is done to liberate the soul from the family and is believed that on the tenth or twelfth day the soul gets liberated, after this the family, relatives and close friends are called for lunch this is a special lunch which is usually vegetarian and are made in a special way. Usually the favorite food of the deceased person is served either on the ninth or seventh day. The poor and needy are also served food on the same day that is after the tenth or twelfth day. This is served in the memory of the departed person. In some sects the morning maybe for 40 days in some it may be for one year.

In some Hindu sects the burial system is also practiced most of the rituals would be the same but only thing which is different is that the body would be buried some bury it in the sleeping posture some would bury it in the sitting posture. Some who are affluent would bury the body in their own field, this burial ground would be outside the city or village this burial ground is called Shamshana this is a Sanskrit word.

Thus, the rites and rituals which are followed maybe the simple way or the complex way depending on the ability to do and the finance of the family and so on for example some may do the death rituals which has to be done monthly or some families may decide to do only after one year of the passing away of the family member. Thus, the laws are flexible there are no hard and fast rule that we must do these rituals and rites these are done only for our way of thinking or beliefs.

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2.4 References:

1. Hindu Rites and Rituals origins and meanings by K. V. Singh
2. The law of Possession: Ritual, Healing and Secular state by William Sax, Helene Basu
3. Indian Mythology: Tales, Symbols and Rituals from the heart of the sub-continent by Devdutt Pattanaik
4. Daily life in Indian culture: An insightful guide to customs and traditions of India by Thota Ramesh
5. www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religioud/hinduism/ritesrituals/baby.shtml

Chapter 3

Supreme Court Judgement/Verdict of the Babri Masjid

3.1 Introduction:

The Supreme Court was tasked with a dispute which was as old as India itself. The events which are mentioned are from the periods of the Mughal Empire, colonial rule by the British and the present independent India's constitutional rule. There were disputes from the 18th century but not so serious but from the 1950 onwards till 1989 the appeals were on the rise in the Allahabad High court they had an extensive evidence both oral and documented which resulted in three judgements which ran to about 4304 pages. This judgement was a challenge to the appeals. Both the religions that is Hindus and the Muslims put a claim to the disputed land claiming it to be their land and both didn't want to let go of the site. The disputes and filing of the cases were happening for nearly seven decades before the final judgement came into existence. There were the sentiments and ideologies which were stated in their appeals both the Hindus and the Muslims.

Like a suit was instituted in 1989 saying that the site belongs to the Hindus as it was the birth place of Lord Ram.

There were Several Suits which were Filed Starting from 1950:

- a. First suit was on 13th January 1950 by on Gopal Singh Visharad who was a resident of Ayodhya and was a follower of Sanatan Dharma.
- b. Second suit was by the Muslim board stating that the mosque was a place of worship of the Muslims. According to them the Idols of Lord Ram was placed in the mosque without the knowledge of them that is the Muslims.
- c. Third suit was instituted by Nirmohi Akhara through Mahant Jagat Das claiming that it was always a Hindu place of worship which always has been managed by Nirmohi Akhara this is a religious group of the Hindus.
- d. Suit Four: was instituted by the Sunni Central Waqf Board on 18th December 1961 this was done to favor the entire Muslim community that the mosque belonged to the Muslims because 433 years back this was built by Emperor Babur.
- e. Suit five: This was put forth by 1st July 1989 stating that the Hindu Mahasabha had an equal claim over the site like the Muslim board.

The Issues which are observed by Justice Sudhir Agarwal are as Follows:

- a. Notice under Section 80 C. P. C
- b. Religious Denomination
- c. Waqf Act 13 of 1936 etc
- d. Miscellaneous issues like representative nature of suit, Trust, Section 91 C. P. C, non-joinder of parties, valuation/insufficient court fee/under valuation and special costs.

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- e. Person and period-who and when constructed the disputed building.
- f. Deities, their status, rights etc
- g. Limitation
- h. Possession/adverse possession
- i. Site as birth place, existence of temple and demolition if any.
- j. Character of Mosque
- k. Identity of property
- l. Bar of Specific Relief Act
- m. Others if any.

3.2 Timeline of Files Submitted:

He (Justice Sudhir Aggarwal) also gave a bird's eye view of the evidence got which follows:

- a. Plaintiffs (Suit 1)-Exhibits number 1 to 34 (Total 34)
- b. Plaintiffs (Suit 3)-Exhibits number 1 to 21 (Total 21)
- c. Plaintiffs (Suit 4)-Exhibits number 1 to 128 (Total 128)
- d. Plaintiffs (Suit 5)- Exhibits number 1 to 132 (Total 132)
- e. Defendants (Suit 1) Exhibits number-1 to A72 (Total 73)
- f. Defendants (Suit 4) a) Exhibits number A1 to A16 (Total 16)
 - Exhibits number M1 to M7 (Total 7)
 - Exhibits number B1 to B16 (Total 16)
 - Exhibits number J1 to J31 (Total 32)
 - Exhibits number T1 to T6 (Total 6)
 - Exhibit number V1 (Total 1)
 - Exhibits number Q1 to Q6 (Total 6)
- g. Defendants (Suit 5) a) Exhibits number C1 to C11 (Total 11)
 - Exhibits number D1 to D38 (Total 38)
 - Exhibits number E1 to E8 (Total 12)

All these Exhibits put together reach a grand total 533. The description of the exhibits is:

Religious Texts, Travelogues, Gazetteers (geographical index or dictionary), Translations of inscriptions on the pillars, Reports of Archaeological excavation, Photographs prior to demolition and details of artifacts found at the site.

The statements of both the parties were recorded in court also the testimony of many witnesses was also taken into consideration. There were more than 50 witnesses to testify for the case which was there some of the names of the witnesses are: 1) Sri Mohammed Hashim, 2) Sri Hazi Mahboob Ahmed, 3) Sushil Srivastava (Historian), 4) Prof. Suraj Bhan (Archaeologist), 5) Maulana Atiq Ahmad (Religious Matters), 6) Mahant Paramhans Ram Chandra Das, 7) Kaushal Kishor Misra, 8) Dr. S. P. Gupta, 9) Sri Ram Srivastava and many others.

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All these witnesses came from different walks of life with different kinds of opinions and ideologies and each had their own version to say as to what they witnessed when they saw the Babri Masjid became debris, according to a statement given by Mr. Zafaryab Jilani who was the member of the Sunni Central Waqf Board says that it is denied and disputed that the place the Babri Masjid stood was a place of Lord Rams birth and he also denied the fact that there was any Ram Janam Bhoomi which the Hindus claim existed at the site of Babri Masjid at any given time similar thoughts were vouched by many muslims.

But the Hindus thought differently they were very firm on their belief that Ram Janam Bhoomi did exist on the site of Babri Masjid with both parties feeling these kinds of view it was necessary to know the background of the salient aspects of the documentary evidence which came to light as documentary evidence.

Thus, this dispute of the site dates back to as early as 1856-1857 when the first communal riots took place during the British rule they took this as an advantage and tried to bring the policy of divide and rule when they saw the friction between the two groups.

On November 28th 1858 a report was submitted by a Sheetal Dubey who was the thanadar of Oudh now Ayodhya this was a report stating that a Hawan and Pooja was organized inside the mosque by a person named Nihang Singh.

He was said to erect a religious symbol of the Hindus this was witnessed by 25 who were there for security.

To this there was a report submitted by Syed Mohammad Khateeb who said that Nihang Singh was creating a riot inside the Masjid premises he wanted the symbol to be removed and the site to be inspected and the raise of the Chabootra this should then be removed or demolished and drive the Hindus away along with that to demolish the Idol or symbol and also wash the walls of the Hindu writings which were present.

On December 1885 stated that the masjid was built by Emperor Babur and as claimed by Mohammed Asghar stated that above the door of the mosque the name Allah was inscribed he said there were no permission of the Hindus to use the courtyard of the mosque as the whole place was the sole property of the Muslims and no one else.

The prayer for a construction of a temple was not accepted. But this was dismissed by the Sub-Judge on December 24th 1885 the result was there was a wall erected by the government and it separated the dome structure from the outer courtyard where the Chabootra did exist for the Hindus this was also done to prevent the conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims, this was done so that the muslims could pray inside the mosque and the Hindus could pray in the courtyard if this permission to grant building a temple near the mosque it will tend to have conflicts between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Then it was decided that there would be separate entrances made to the Hindus and Muslims to worship. In 1855-56 resulted in a brick wall and railing which was put outside the mosque outside portion to the Hindus to worship Ramchabutra and Sita Rasoi. There were two entrances made the Muslims entered the mosque through the outer courtyard.

3.3 Period between 1934-1949:

There was damage done to the mosque due to a communal conflict which was restored, the colonial administration sanctioned for the repair work to the damaged mosque this repair work was given to a Muslim contractor.

A series of incidents took place between March and December in 1949 on 19th March a deed was made by the Panches of Nirmohi Akhara stating that the premises in the site of the masjid was the premises of the Hindus this group placed idols inside the premises and this incident was known fact to the State government of Uttar Pradesh they took no steps to stop this from happening.

Then on 12th November 1949 a police picket was posted in the area, on 29th November 1949 the Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate of Faizabad said that he noticed several Havan Kunds which were constructed all around the mosque some of them built on old constructions which were already existing they had a proposal to build a very big Havan Kunds where Yagna and Kirtan would be constructed which would be attended by Hindus, Bairagi and Sadhus this would surround the mosque in such a way that entry to the Muslims who would like to visit the mosque to pray would be made difficult. On December 10th 1949 the Waqf inspector named Mohammed Ibrahim submitted a report to the secretary of the Masjid stating that Muslims were prevented to enter the mosque to pray or to say their namaz due to the fear of Hindus and Sikhs and there was a danger to the mosque he said that if someone was stuck in the mosque that Muslim was harassed and abused.

When inquiries were made this was true, local people said that the mosque was in danger stating that the mosque was a Shahi monument hence should be preserved. Later on, it was stated that the mosque was built with the building material of the temple which was meant to be for the Hindus in the name of Lord Ram. On the night of 22-23 December 1949 Hindu idols were placed inside Babri Masjid by a group of nearly 50-60 persons wherein a FIR was lodged complaining of the installation of the idols inside the inner courtyard of the disputed site. This was lodged on 23rd December 1949 by Ram Deo Dubey sub-inspector under sections 147,295,448 of the Indian Penal Code.

After this 5000 Hindus had come to perform Kirtan, 50-60 people broke the locks and entered the premises of the mosque thus, committing a trespass breach by entering and placing idols and disrespecting the Muslims place of worship, people complained that by doing such acts it only goes to show that the Hindus are disrespecting the Muslims ethics and norms because of this there were a lot of friction between the two groups this would lead to riots but the UP-Uttar Pradesh government did not take any action when the officials (government) of the state refused to remove the installed idols in spite of the orders received by the State Government which confirmed that the officials stood for the Hindus and disobeyed the orders put by the government. Because of this the government appointed Sri Priya Datt Ram- Chairman Municipal Board to look into the matter of the dispute between the Hindus and the Muslims. He asked both the Hindus and Muslims to write their grievances on paper and come to him on 17th January 1950 at the Ayodhya police station at 11 AM, after reading the complaints of both the court would take a decision, both parties appeals would be read and analyzed and dealt with in the course of judgement.

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Like the submissions of both the parties to the court whether the mosque fulfilled every feature for the construction of the mosque before coming to a decision whether it was right to keep the idols. Cultural assimilation is a significant factor which shapes the manner in which the religion is practiced, in a pluralist society in India no religion would favor the destructive methods of any religious doctrines, and thus, culture cannot be considered as a destructive feature. The court also acts on a secular and constitutional order.

Tolerance, respect for acceptance of the equality of all religious faith is the fundamental law of all religions. The Union Minister of Home Affairs before the Rajya Sabha on September 12th 1991 said that India was known for its civilization and the greatest contribution to the world civilization is the kind of tolerance, understanding cosmopolitan approach as in the Advaita philosophy where it is mentioned that all God is one you can name him in whatever way you want and if you believe that God resides in each one of us we would not be having so many conflicts, there by saying that the same God is everywhere in a temple, in a mosque and so on.

Where by secularism is a constitutional value which believes in the freedom of belief, faith or worship and equal status to one and all thus, secularism being a positive concept of treating all religions as equal which means that it is neutral towards all religions. If people don't abide by these rules then it is said to be unconstitutional.

If we can describe God he is omnipotent, omniscient and his presence is felt not by any form or image but by reason of the presence of the omnipotent. It is formless, shapeless the idols are manifestation of the worshippers which are images of the Supreme Being or power called GOD.

The faith and belief of the worshippers are the paramount importance. On this point the Hindus argue that the place itself even if there is no idol or pictures the land itself is a place of worship because of the fact that Lord Ram was born at that disputed site. Then the Hindus said that an Idol of Lord Ram manifested on its own at the central dome of the Babri Masjid premises, which was called the syambhu deity-came by itself or manifested by itself.

This was according to the faith and belief of the Hindus which may not be accepted by the Muslims as each ones beliefs are different in nature for example Muslims don't believe in the concept of deities and noise of bells ringing which is very important in the Hindu temples where Hindus have immense faith in the concept of deities. Religion is a deep entrenchment in a social fabric of Indian society.

Religion has the power to move hearts and minds. The Hindus by keeping an Idol of Lord Ram inside the central dome disturbed the peace of both the parties namely the Hindus and the Muslims. It was argued by the Muslim board that the mosque belonged to them because it was built by Emperor Babur and they have been worshiping there for the past 400 years which make them the rightful owners of the mosque as they had been in procession since 1528, the court then said that the inner courtyard of the masjid belonged only to the Muslims and no one else had the right to worship there that is the Hindus should not use the inner courtyard. Then it was decided that the Hindus could pray on the outer courtyard and were also provided a separate entrance to worship their God.

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According to Mr. K. Parasaran learned Senior Counsel appeared on behalf of the plaintiff in Suit-5 he said that Asthan Sri Ram Janam Bhoomi is an object of worship which personifies the place of worship or the spirit of the divine he said that God was shapeless and doesn't require an idol as a form, but on this basis the land cannot be distributed because only with faith and belief saying that it was a birthplace of Lord Ram is not tangible.

According to some judges the property of worship belongs to nobody it is a common place of worship for its followers, which is used by the public in other words.

Mr. Parasaran argues that the birth place of Ram on the disputed site should rightly belong to the Hindu he gives the example of Chidambaram Temple of Tamil Nadu that there can exist a temple without a form, he also argues that idol is one form of manifestation of the divine by saying that in Chidambaram temple there is an altar which has no idol but only a curtain which is hung before a wall where people go to worship when the curtain is open they see the space where they are able to see the Akasha Lingam which is a formless deity which is only a feeling with comes with faith and belief this is also known as Chidambara Rahasyam which means the secret of Chidambaram.

Same way he argues that if Hindus believes that ram was born there then the land should be given to them for their belief that the disputed land is the land of the Hindus where Lord Ram was born, and the place or site is of religious significance for Hindus but this in itself is not enough to confer juridical personality on the land. That is to say each case should be subsisted on the facts and how relevant it is. When the Hindus claimed that the deity of Lord Ram was Swayambhu deity there had to be some evidence to this statement of manifestation of the deity, faith and belief that the material brought forward was a representation of the divine. If the Hindus could prove the Swayambhu deity the it would open many opportunities that is if they are not able to prove this fact then they cannot put a claim on the disputed property. First they have to find out what is the title deed of the property next in whose name is the disputed site in and lastly who is looking after the disputed property before taking a decision whether the land where Ram was born was really the place where he was born if so where is the proof only belief and faith cannot solve the matter which is at hand regarding the claim to the site.

The Hindus felt that they were deprived of their right to worship this was their view, to this the Muslims said that they only had claims to worship there as the mosque was built by Emperor Babur for them and for several hundred years they have being praying here the Muslims have always been in procession of the mosque where Namaz had been offered till the night of 16th December 1949 till when there were no idols placed in the central dome after this the Hindus placed the idols illegally which is an offence and the Muslims felt that they should be punished for this deed thus violating the law under Section 145 of the CrPC 1898 which had been initiated against the Hindus stating that Babri Masjid as the place of the Janmasthan is without basis as there exists other temples with idols of Lord Ram which is the actual place of Lord Rams Janmasthan. According to Justice S.U.Khan no temple was demolished for the construction of the mosque when it was constructed nobody believed that this place was the birthplace of Lord Ram. According to Sudhir Agarwal (Justice) says that the place worshipped and believed by the Hindu is the area covered under the central dome of the disputed structures. Justice D.V.Sharma did not agree with both the defendants.

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The other argument put forth by Nirmohi Akhara (religious group) the Janmabhoomi always belonged to the Hindus and the managing and offerings offered have always been with their group and since 1934 Hindus he said that they were accused of wrongly deprived of their management and running of the temple. This problem arose on 5th January 1950, as the Akharas felt that they should get the rights to worship on the disputed site but placing of idols inside the mosque was not right, the court dealing with the legal matters of the disputed site said that there were no evidence stating that there was a temple on this disputed site.

The suit which was instituted in 1959 the Hindus never had a procession of the inner courtyard of the mosque as they didn't have proper evidence of the claim on the disputed site.

There were Many Title Cases put Forth for the Claim on the Disputed Site:

The first one was of Gopal Singh Visharad in 1950 claiming to perform puja or worship at the disputed site this was filed in the Allahabad High Court, a similar one was again put forth by Paramhans Das of Ayodhya which was later withdrawn. Nirmohi Akhara a religious institution filed a third suit in 1959 seeking the charge, claiming to be the custodian. The Sunni Waqf Board claimed a suit claiming the possession of the site in the Allahabad High Court in 2002 which went on till 2010 which was later on dismissed by the Supreme Court the judgement at that time was the disputed land to be divided into three parts:

- a. Ram Lalla idol would go to the party representing Ram Lalla Virajman (the installed infant Ram deity)
- b. Sita Rasoi and Ram Chabutara to Nirmohi Akhara
- c. The rest of the site to the Sunni Waft Board

This was decided by three-member Justices at Allahabad Court on 30th September 2010 the members were S.U. Khan, Sudhir Agarwal and D.V. Sharma. The three-member team did not like the Judges descion so they appealed to the Supreme Court. This above judgement was there only for three months before the appeal was processed. The final hearing of the Supreme Court was as follows, this case was going on from 6th August 2019 and on November 9th 2019 the verdict was given that the site should be handed over to the Hindu, who in turn had a Trust to build a temple in place of the mosque.

Before the announcement of the verdict there were many precautionary measures which were taken like the Security was tightened throughout India thousands of police troops and paramilitary forces were appointed to Ayodhya and there were also CCTV cameras and drones which were set up to watch the area of the disputed site.

A public holiday was declared in schools and colleges in the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh security were tightened in places like Hyderabad, Telangana, Old City-Charminar and Mecca Masjid. Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai also were on high alert.

Prime Minister also announced the whole nation to maintain peace and harmony.

3.4 Views of People Regarding Babri Masjid:

- **Reactions of People to the Verdict of the Babri Masjid:**

In the words of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, there was far sightedness of our judiciary which reaffirmed the transparency and independence only goes to show the increased faith of the Indian citizens on the judiciary system. Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav said it was an important step which was taken in the right direction. He says to give the Muslims an equal to build a mosque that is 5-acre land wherever they wished to build a mosque he felt this verdict was a historic verdict because the dispute in hand was a very old one. He appealed to the people to be in peace and harmony with both the communities of the Hindus and Muslims which in turn would shape into a better India.

Advani who played a key role towards the Hindus getting the site was very happy with the verdict which favored the Hindus he said he felt deeply blessed by the verdict given by the Supreme Court favoring the construction of building a temple on the disputed site in Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh). One Islam Majumder of the Tripura Waft Board said that this verdict ended the long dispute among the Hindus and Muslims which was a critical issue, he also hoped that all the parties would take this decision in the right way and remain peaceful. The Sunni Waft Board also were with the verdict and they had no plan to challenge it. The UP-chief minister Yogi Adityanath said that he was satisfied with the decision and he thanked all the citizens who also felt that the verdict was correct. Asaduddin Owaisi felt that it was a victory for the people's belief over the facts.

Sri Ravi Shankar also said that the verdict came as a joy and relief to the common people of both the Hindu and Muslim communities.

He was also part of the mediation panel who was appointed by the apex court for taking the decision of this disputed site. The BJP-Bharatiya Janata Party were very happy that the people stood together by keeping the social, cultural and spiritual fabric of the country intact. The decision taken has also given a given a message that we are all strong and united democracy a member of a BJP party told. Masjid Shahi an imam of Jama Masjid said that people should respect and accept the verdict of the Supreme Court to have peace between the communities that is the Hindu and Muslim. Some also said that if everyone accepts the verdict only then there would be peace throughout India they said we should neither rejoice or celebrate but we should be neutral to the decision made to protect the sovereignty of the country which should be each one's priority as a citizen of the country.

Shiv Sena Chief Uddhav Thackeray said that the day the verdict was announced that day would be written in golden words in history of India. He said that he would visit the site shortly. Due to this verdict Ayodhya's disputed site would be handed over for the construction of a temple to a Hindu Trust who would there after construct a temple in the name of Lord Ram.

There were mixed feelings between both the groups of Hindus and Muslims which is but natural but a majority of people felt that if a Ram temple was built on the disputed area then there would be a lot of tourists who would come to visit this temple.

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There was also a sense of relief among both the communities stating that the dispute has finally come to an end with this verdict. One Muslim named Akram Khan Person stated that there were so much of hostility among both the groups and he says that more than five generations have witnessed this anger and hostility which finally came to an end with this verdict so he was very happy with the judgement. He said that senior members of his group were also part of the negotiations which took place. People on social Media were very vocal about their thoughts some felt that the decision was faith-based Kapil Komireddi an author on the Twitter said that what happened is not an end to any conflict but it may be a beginning of some more new issues. Thus, we can see that each one had their opinion of the verdict for everything there is always two sides one who agrees and one who disagrees here we should only see the percentage of the people who agree and disagree.

• **Summary of the Verdict of Babri Masjid:**

The verdict was actually of 1,045 pages so hence the summary of the proceedings of the verdict: There were 18 petitions which were put forth by both the sides to have their claim on the disputed site. Out of which nine were filed by parties who were part of the earlier allegations and the rest of nine petitions were filed by third parties one of the petitioner was the All India Muslim Personal Law Board-AIMPLB.

The view of these petitions was said that they were lacking in merits. Over the years the dispute and bitterness between the two groups-Hindus/Muslims only kept increasing and there were a lot of violence and then the demolition was the ultimate which attacked the faith and belief of both the groups on the fight of the disputed site.

Before this ultimate move of violence both the groups went to the court plenty of times in regard to the site.

One of the Main Grounds of Trail was that:

- a. The foundation of the mosque is based on the walls of a large pre-existing structure.
- b. The pre-existing structure dates back to the 12th century
- c. The underlying structure which provided the foundations of the mosque together with its architectural features and recoveries are suggestive of a Hindu religious origin which had temple excavations in the region and pertaining to the era.
- d. According to ASI-Archeological Survey of India underlying the structure there is a time gap of about four centuries between the constructions of the mosque no evidence found between the 400 years.
- e. Accounts of travelers in the 18th century chiefly the account of Tieffenthaler and Montgomery Martin suggests the existence of the birth place of Ram-Hindu God in and around the disputed area
- f. Presence of large number of followers of Hindus on festival days especially before the construction of the wall which separated the Hindus and Muslims.

The arguments of these cannot be taken only on the basis of faith and belief. Later on, it was proved that the two pillars which were in the mosque was that of Hindu origin this was stated by the ASI.

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A five bench of judges together pronounced the verdict on 9th November 2019 the judges' names are Ranjan Gogoi, DY Chandrachud, Sharad Arvind Bobde, S. Abdul Nazeer, and Ashok Bhushan. The verdict summary is as follows:

The court ordered the Government of India to form a Trust to construct a temple of Lord Ram and form a Board of Trustees within three months of the verdict. The property would then be transferred to the Trust after the formation of the Trust with the Trust members. The whole disputed land should be handed over to the Hindus where there in a temple of Lord Ram can be built and another five acres of land would be allotted to the Muslims/Sunni Waft Board at a suitable place in Ayodhya to build a mosque.

The court said that the Allahabad High Court in 2010 was not a correct verdict as the division of the disputed land was incorrect. The court also said that the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the keeping of the idol on December 22-23 in 1949 was also the violation of the law or we can say against the law.

It was proved that the Babri Masjid was a structure on a previous destroyed structure of the Hindus by the ASI-Archeological Survey of India. And it was also proved that the structure found below the Babri Masjid was non-Islamic. The ruins under that need not necessarily mean that the mosque was built in an unfriendly manner/unfriendly powers or there was no forced method used to build the mosque as said in the 1045 pages of the verdict.

It was stated that Guru Nanak visited Ayodhya and offered his prayers at Ram Mandir in 1510-11 AD the account also states that there was a puja which was performed by Nihang Sikh inside the mosque in 1857. The Sunni Waft Board of the Muslims did not establish that the disputed land belongs only to the Muslims, the Hindus had furnished better evidence to claim that the land was the birthplace of Lord Ram. In 1856-57 there was a railing which stated the separation of the outer courtyard and the inner courtyard the outer being that of the Hindus and the inner belonging to the Hindus, later on it was also mentioned that the Hindus had the access to the inner courtyard as well. The court declared that the rights should also belong to the Nirmohi Akhara who were a Hindu religious group, this group should also be included as one of the Trustees of the Ram Mandir. The court rejected the claim made by the Muslims Sunni Waft Board for the ownership of the Babri Masjid. The court also dismissed the 18 petitions which were made this was dismissed on 12th December 2019.

The Sunni Waft Board accepted the verdict and said that they would not put a claim on the land of Babri Masjid. The court should also preserve the sense of balance in such a way that belief of one citizen does not interfere with the belief or freedom of another human being it was also stated that the court does not pass a judgement only on the basis of faith and belief but on the facts and evidence in hand which is the main component to pass any judgement. The Muslims did not have any evidence to prove that the disputed land belonged solely to them. But they have been wrongly deprived of a mosque which was built nearly 450 years ago which was legally wrong. The Sunni Waft Board should be given a land in Ayodhya with an equivalent of 5 acres of land in a place where they that is the Muslims choose to have it in Ayodhya this should be granted by the state government or the central government.

Supreme Court Judgement/Verdict of the Babri Masjid

All this led to the construction of the Ram temple as the verdict which happened after years and years of dispute the Hindus won the justice was in favor of the Hindus this judgement or verdict was a joyful day for the Hindus but it was not so for the Muslims that is but natural but the population of the Muslims is far less than the Hindus where the majority of the Indians in India are Hindus.

But some of the Muslim groups felt that finally the verdict brought in some peace and harmony which the dispute of the fight of the land had ended which was a good thing and the prime minister also appealed to the people to accept the verdict with a calm and peaceful mind. Thus, it is noted that religion plays a very important role in every one's lives as each one of us feel a strong bonding with our religion. Some people are so fanatical about their religion that they would go to any extreme to fulfill their ideology and they would even expect the other party to understand their ideology which is ethically very wrong and not accepted under any circumstances there are many wars which are fought to emphasize that their religion is superior to the other religion this attitude should change among people only then can all the people together could lead a peaceful and harmonious lives.

Standing example of clashing of religion is the Babri Masjid case if only both the parties had let go then none of this would have happened and the mosque would have still been there but people were not willing to let go of their egos they didn't want to have compassion for the others even though compassion was one of the core component of religion the other being respect. Why do people worship God it is to mainly bring us a calm within ourselves which we don't seem to be in this competitive world so for solace everyone turns to the supreme being namely God we may call him many names but he is a super power without a form or shape we as human beings have given him a shape which we like to view him as.

But though all of us know that there is only one God but still the conflicts arise as to whose God is better it is human nature to feel that whomsoever we worship we feel that is the best God to worship we all also accept the fact that all religions leads to God but due to the extremism and fanaticism within us we tend to revolt against another group in the name of religion funny because religion teaches one to be compassionate, loving, caring and without having ego but unfortunately this is not so thus, conflict leads to so much of trouble both mentally, physically and emotionally.

If the world is able to follow this then definitely the world would be a better and calmer place like the saying goes each one teach one similarly it should be each one respect the others religion, faith and beliefs. Due to extremism the violence increased in a group which could go to such an extent where one group could also destroy the others place of worship there may be many arguments that the land on which the masjid stood belonged to the Hindus but even then, to be violent and kill innocent people and demolish a place of worship is not the right thing to do as no religion teaches one to use violence to acquire a place of worship and indeed it was a very sad state of affairs that a place of worship was destroyed by a religion called Hinduism which primarily stood for peace and non-violence in a land where Mahatma Gandhi got independence to India by the non-violence method so this act of violence is a black mark on Hinduism as well as India on the whole well we cannot put the clock back but we can prevent from this violence happening again this can only be achieved if we all can be peaceful and live with harmony towards other religions.

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Same way towards the verdict also all should respect the final decision of the Supreme Court and remain peaceful avoiding violence in every way to keep the harmony of the place going.

The country finally hopes that the people of India would finally realize the damage that is done by the people in a communal conflicts and also hopes that this is an eye-opener for all the amount of violence and bitterness this violence has brought about a country which got independence by non-violence, this being the case we as the people should be ashamed that people indulged in such violence in the fabric of religion where the religion teaches just the opposite.

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Chapter 4

Famous Mosques of Islam

4.1 Introduction:

Each religion has a place of worship in whichever country they live the place of worship of the Muslims is the Mosque which they consider very sacred all the mosques follow certain rules, norms, regulations, customs and traditions for a Muslim to enter a mosque. There a number of rules which are present for centuries which are even followed today. Let us talk about the famous mosques which are present throughout the world:

A brief sketch of famous mosques

4.2 Great Mosque of Mecca:

This mosque is commonly known as al-Masjid al-Haram also referred as the sacred Mosque because this Mosque is near the Black Kaaba this mosque is situated in the Hejazi region of Saudi Arabia. This is also the sight of pilgrimage for the Muslims which is known as Hajj which every Muslim tends to do at least once in their lifetime this hajj should be done in a specific time but there is one called Umrah which is termed as a lesser pilgrimage which can be done any time of the year. This mosque includes other important places like the Black stone, the Zamzam Well, Maqam Ibrahim and the hills of Safa and Marwa. This mosque is the largest mosque in the world and the most important mosque according to the Muslims this has undergone many renovations during the hundreds of years this mosque is under the control of the King of Saudi Arabia who is titled the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. This mosque has more than 5million people who undertake this pilgrimage in a year this is mostly done in the month of Dhu al-Hijjah according to the Islamic calendar.

Rules to go on a Hajj are that they wear simple white clothing called Ihram also means to be pure and have positive thoughts while visiting the holy place of worship, regardless of their social stature, wealth and status all are said to be equal in the eyes of Allah or God this is the fifth pillar of faith according to the Muslim belief. No non-Muslim is allowed to visit Mecca. When they are on this pilgrimage or Hajj they are not supposed to shave, cut nails, use perfumes or scented oils, kill or hunt anything nor should they fight or argue. Women should not cover their face as they used to do so otherwise in their country. Men should not wear clothing which is stitched they can bathe but no soaps are allowed while on the pilgrimage. This pilgrimage starts from a place called Miqat this is also termed as the entry station to the Hajj which is close to Mecca here people have a bath then wear the Ihram meaning their white clothes and then begin praying this is known as Tabiya Dua which means prayer then they go to the mosque and then walk around the Black Kaaba seven times repeating their prayers then they proceed to the Zam Zam well to drink the holy water which is believed to save Ismail and Hijra from dying of thirst then they go to the walkway between the hills called Safa and Marwa this they do seven times after this they go to a place called Mina which is 8 km from Mecca they either travel by foot or they can go by bus or car. Thus, we see that there are lot of rules to follow to go on a pilgrimage.

4.3 Al Masjid a Nabawi - Mosque in Medina, Saudi Arabia:

This Mosque is situated in Saudi Arabia this is built by Prophet Muhammed in the Hejaz region this was one of the first mosques built by Prophet Muhammed this is the second largest mosque in the world next to Mecca this Mosque is considered to be holy like the mosque in Mecca this mosque is always open regardless of date or time. People who go on a Hajj usually go to this mosque also because this was the place Prophet settled in after his migration from Mecca.

This is the resting place of Prophet Muhammed. It was built by the Prophet after he migrated from Mecca to Medina the Mosque has been extended over the years the recent being 1990s the most prominent feature of this mosque is the green dome on top over the centre of the mosque. There are prayers which take place five times daily. They have a Sunday school also.

4.4 Quba Mosque - Situated on the outskirts of Medina:

It is believed that Prophet Muhammed first placed a stone in this Mosque when he migrated from Mecca to Medina the building of the mosque was completed by the disciples of Prophet Muhammed as the saying goes the first Friday prayer was started here by the Prophet himself. He is believed to have spent 14 days here praying which is called Qasr which means a short prayer. The Prophet waited for Ali to arrive as he had sent him to Mecca on some errands. This is one of the oldest mosque in Islam it was renovated in 1986 the old structures were replaced by new structures which were identical to the old structure. This mosque is also mentioned in the Quran. This mosque is situated in the Heraz region of Saudi Arabia. This mosque has six domes this mosque had a large prayer hall which was situated in the centre of the mosque.

4.5 Blue Mosque - Situated in Istanbul in Turkey:

This mosque is also known as Sultan Ahmed Mosque this mosque attracted a lot of tourists the whole mosque was built with blue tiles and during the night the lights put were also blue thus termed as the blue Mosque this was built by Sultan Ahmed to bring back the power of the ottoman Ahmed funded the mosque from his treasury as he had not won any great wars. This mosque had five domes and there were a lot of hand painted ceramic tiles 20,000 in number these were found on the walls of the interior of the mosque there were designs of the tulip (different types), flowers and fruits the main colour which dominated was blue the mosque is designed in such a way that even if the mosque is crowded everyone can see the Imam or Priest. This mosque was built in 1609 non-Muslim people are allowed to enter from the west side of the Mosque, there are rules while entering the mosque ladies are supposed to wear a dress which covers her whole body their head should also be covered with a fabric this is available within the mosque if people don't have their own, men are not allowed to wear shorts they have to wear full pants to enter the mosque all people who enter the mosque are supposed to remove their slippers or shoes as they are not allowed to wear them inside the mosque the mosque is closed for non-muslims during their prayer times which happen five times a day. Thus, the non-muslims have to inquire about the timings of the mosque if they wish to see it.

Thousands of people come to visit the mosque there is also a donation box at the exit of the mosque if they want they can donate this money collected goes towards the maintenance of the mosque.

Thus, we can see that people liked to see the beauty of the mosque thus they used to come to see this beautiful mosque.

4.6 Hagia Sophia - This was once a Church now it is a Mosque:

Hagia Sophia was a Greek name it was first a Greek orthodox Christian patriarchal cathedral which later on went to be an ottoman imperial mosque now this has become a museum in Istanbul in Turkey it is said to be built in 537AD this was famous for its massive dome the whole structure was built with bricks and mortar joints which were made up of sand and ceramic pieces which were minute and was equally distributed throughout the mortar joints this combination was equalent to the modern days concrete from 537 to 1453 this building functioned as a church after 1453.

It was a mosque until 1931 afterwards this was a considered as a museum this museum opened to the public in 1935. A monarch named Sultan Mehmet in a war defeated Constantinople and then he took over Hagia Sophia this building was looted by the invaders as soon as the sultan took over he immediately converted it into a mosque saying that Allah is only the supreme God and everyone should pray to him thus the Christian priests were removed and the church became a mosque a mihrab was located facing Mecca and the altar which had Jesus was removed then whole building was transformed into a mosque according to the Sultan.

All the ascenders of the Sultan also focused on the renovation of the mosque they built a library and a kitchen which was constructed to feed the poor. In 1935 the first Turkish President and founder of the republic of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Ataturk he was the reason for the mosque becoming a Museum.

4.7 Sheikh Zayed Mosque - Situated in Abu Dhabi in Saudi Arabia:

Abu Dhabi is the capital of the United Arab Emirates this is the largest mosque in the country this is the main place of worship for daily prayers, Eid prayers for which 41,000 people come to pray Friday prayers are also there at this mosque they traditionally follow the Sunni Muslims the mosque has 82 domes of different sizes this mosque was constructed in 1996 to 2007 it was designed by a Syrian architect named Yousef Abdelky this mosque covers an area of 12 hectares the mosque is aligned in the direction of the Black Kaaba of Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

This mosque was launched by the late president Sultan Sheikh Zayed bin Al Nahyan who wanted a structure which was built modern and historical style of culture this kind of architecture was applied to build this mosque after the Sheikh Zayed passed away he was buried in the complex which was adjacent to the mosque there is also a huge library which is there in the mosque which has a huge variety of books which are there in several languages like Arabic, English, French, German and so on.

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The mosque was built with natural materials like marble stone, gold, semi-precious stones, crystals and ceramic. The artisans and materials came from many countries like India, Italy, Germany, Pakistan, Iran, Egypt and many others this mosque is large enough to accommodate more than 40,000 people there is one large prayer hall which is called the main hall which can accommodate about 7000 at one time there are two small halls which can hold up to 1500 people there is also a separate hall for the women to pray the carpet in the main hall is supposed to be one of the largest carpet in the world made in Iran this was made by one artisan named Ali Khaliqi the weight of this carpet is 35 tons.

There are pools which are around the mosque which are illuminated in the night. This mosque looks very grand and beautiful.

4.8 Jama Masjid – Delhi:

This mosque is also called Masjid e Jahan Numa is one of the largest mosque in India this mosque was built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the year 1650 this was completed in the year 1656 this mosque was inaugurated by Imam Syed Abdul Ghafoor Shah Bukhari from Bukhara present day Uzbekistan. The mosque has three gates and high minarets or pillars this was built with 5000 workers this mosque was originally called Masjid e Jahan meaning commanding the view of the world.

The courtyard can hold up to 25,000 people to pray this was one of the last monuments built by Shah Jahan this mosque is made up of marble and limestone during the revolt in 1857 the Madrasa which was built near the mosque was destroyed by the British but they could not destroy the mosque the Nizam of Hyderabad gave money to renovate the mosque.

There are three domes and two minarets or pillars. Mostly red sandstone and marble was used to build the mosque the construction of the mosque was done under Saadullah Khan who was the prime minister of Shah Jahan. He also built Taj Mahal in Agra and Red Fort in old Delhi. The word Jama also stands for Friday which is very important day for Muslims to pray.

4.9 Taj ul Masajid - Situated in Bhopal in India:

This mosque is one of the largest mosques in Asia it is also referred as the crown of mosques it has three domes and two minarets or pillars the construction of this mosque was started in 1844 by Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar later on took over by Nawab Shah Jahan Begum and was continued by her daughter Sultan Jahan Begum the mosque could not be completed because there wasn't enough money to complete after a long time that is after the revolt of 1857 the construction was started by Allama Mohammed Imran Khan Nadwi Azhari and Maulana Sayed Hashmat Ali Sahab in 1971 and was completed in 1985 the eastern gate of the mosque was renovated using ancient motifs from circa 1250 Syrian mosques with the contribution of the Emir of Kuwait in memory of his late wife.

The mosque has a large tank of water in the courtyard the flooring is made of marble there are a lot of floral carvings on the wall lots of people come to visit this spectacular mosque. The type of architecture found is Indo-Islamic and Mughal architecture.

4.10 Badshahi Mosque - Lahore in Pakistan:

This mosque is situated in the capital of Pakistan that is Lahore this mosque is a landmark in Lahore this mosque was completed in 1673 it was built with Indo-Islamic and Mughal style of architecture the mosque has three domes and eight minarets out of which four pillars are big and four pillars are small. It was built mainly with red sandstone and marble. This mosque was built by Aurungzeb he started in 1671 this mosque is situated adjacent to the walled city of Lahore and also faces the Lahore fort.

Near the entrance of the mosque is the Tomb of Muhammed Iqbal who was a very famous poet who played a major part of establishing Pakistan as the homeland during the period of the British another Tomb is also located near the mosque that is of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan who played an important role in restoring the mosque.

First the mosque was conquered by the Sikhs they used the mosque for the soldiers to stay and also to keep their weapons and horses after this the British overpowered them and the mosque was under the British rule their small rooms of the mosque was destroyed they set up a Badshahi Mosque Authority which was later on handed over to the Muslims by John Lawrence who was the Viceroy of India. Sikandar Hayat Khan began collecting money to repair the mosque this was supervised by Nawab Alam Yar Jung Bahadur he was buried adjacent to the mosque. The repair work got completed in 1960 in 1933 this mosque was tentatively listed in the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Thus, it became a very beautiful mosque. Many people visit this mosque.

4.11 Rules and Regulations of Places of Worship of Islam – Mosque:

Every place of worship has certain rules and regulations which should be followed by all the people of the community same way Muslims also have norms which is followed to the T some of them are:

- a. The dress code is very important if the person does not follow this dress code he or she will not be allowed into the mosque. They should wear preferably clothes that cover their body including their arms and legs for example short skirts and shorts for men is not allowed.
- b. Shoes is not allowed there is a place outside the mosque to keep the shoes or slippers this is like a sign of respect to God or Allah and another reason is the carpets and rugs would remain clean if one does not wear footwear.
- c. Women should cover their hair when they are inside the mosque the women generally bring their own head covering but sometimes scarves are available for visitor's who visit the mosque.
- d. The mosque should be kept clean people are appointed to keep the mosque and its surroundings clean. This is a place of worship therefore it has to be clean.
- e. Enter with your right foot exit with your left foot.
- f. People bringing children with them should see to it that the children don't make noise as it would disturb the others who are praying.
- g. People should come with the intention to pray to Allah they should not think about anything else while entering the mosque their concentration should be only on Allah.

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- h. The mobile phone should be on silent or switch off mode.
- i. People who come in groups should try and see the Imam.
- j. No eating or drinking is allowed inside the mosque.

Thus, these are the few important rules which have to be followed by people who wish to enter the mosque these are general rules sometimes some mosques may have some rules which have to be followed as some mosque do not allow non-Muslims to visit for various reasons.

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Chapter 5

Festivals of Hinduism

5.1 Introduction:

There are many festivals which are celebrated by the Hindus each festival has some inner meaning to the festivals there are a lot of rituals and customs which are followed in these festivals these are joyous occasions where all the family members get together along with their relatives and friends these times are to enjoy and have a good time with all their family members. There are many delicious sweets and many savory dishes

Which are prepared at home some of the traditional dishes which are prepared would be handed down from the ancestors in the family which that family mostly does prepare that particular dish. There are festivals for every seasons and for every gods or goddesses there are numerous festivals because of the different sects of the Hindus.

a. Some of the main Hindu Festivals are:

- Makar Sankranti or Pongal
- Holi
- Maha Shivarathiri
- Rama Navami
- Onam
- Navaratri or Dussehra or Durga Pooja
- Ganesh Chaturthi
- Ugadi/Tamil new year or Vishu
- Krishna Janmashtami
- Diwali

5.2 The Significance and Rites and Rituals and Customs of Each Festival:

5.2.1 Makar Sankranti or Pongal:

This festival is dedicated to the Lord Surya or the Sun God this is observed in the month of Magha or Thai masam in Tamil according to the Hindu calendar. This always falls in the month of January that is 14th or 15th of January. It is also a celebration as during this time the crops are harvested and the Sun God Surya is worshipped this is a joyous festival this festival is observed according to the solar cycles while most of the other festivals which are set to the lunar cycles according to the Hindu calendar.

There are fairs or melas set up in the villages where small children go from house to house singing and they ask for some sweets or money, Kite flying is also done during this time, there are even bonfires which are lite around which the family members, relatives and friends get along to celebrate together.

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A lot of sweets and special meals are cooked south Indians make Pongal both sweet and salty, the sweet Pongal is usually made up of jaggery, some even make a special sweet which is made up of sesame or til and jaggery this is called Ellu-Bela to this they also add fried groundnuts and pieces of coconut, they also add finely cut jaggery in Karnataka, this is distributed to all their relatives and friends. This festival is traced back to the Mahabharata times and traditional food which is cooked is also very old. This comes down from generations in a given family this method of making the sweets may differ slightly but the main customs remain the same. People also buy sugarcane to keep in front of God. So, the jaggery and sesame is prepared in various ways. In Gujarat the kite flying is very prominent. In Kerala in Sabari malai it is called Makra Valaku which means divine light. Every 12 years during this time people take a dip in the Ganga or Haridwar, Prayag by doing so it is believed that by taking a dip in the river their sins would get washed away this festival which comes every 12 years is also known as Kumbh Mela.

It is believed that Pandavas along with Krishna come every 12 years to take a dip in the Ganga. Thus, this is celebrated all over India in different ways but the main essence of the festive mood is the same.

5.2.2 Holi:

This festival is not only in India but also parts of south Asia. This is also known as the festival of colours or festival of spring. This also denotes the end of winter. This festival signifies good over evil, this falls in the month of Phalguna according to the Hindu calendar it starts on the full moon night and to the morning that a night and a day. Which usually falls in the middle of March. The night previous to Holi is also called choti Holi as the legend goes the sister of Hiranyakasapu was burnt in a fire, she kept Prahalad on her lap and sat in the fire wearing a cloak by which only Prahalad would burn and nothing would happen to her but the devotion of Prahalad towards Lord Vishnu he was saved from the fire but Holika burnt in the fire as her cloak flew away so she got burnt and so there is a bonfire lite by the families one night before Holi.

According to the Hindu beliefs Dharma was saved by Prahalad.

Next day on Holi day people put colour on their friends and relatives it is a joyous occasion where even non-Hindus also join in the celebration there are even musical instruments like drums played there is a lot of dancing people also have Bhang which is the local drug by having this people get intoxicated this festival is enjoyed by all there are many traditional sweets which are prepared and usually pakoras' this is a savory which is usually made with besan onions and deep fried in oil,(are made in abundance and distributed among all family members, relatives and friends).

This festival is also mentioned by Poet Kalidasa in the reign of Chandragupta II in the 4th century. On this day people try to build back their friendship with those whom they had a misunderstanding thus it is a time to forget old grudges and start anew. So, this festive is also ancient. This festival of colours has also influenced the European countries and the United States also, they have a Holi inspired music festival where they also have charity shows where the money collected goes towards charity. Here also people colour each other's face and enjoy this colourful festival.

5.2.3 Maha Shivrathi:

This festival is celebrated by the Hindus once a year. In this festival all Hindus pray to Lord Shiva he is supposed to be one of the important Gods among the trinity Gods which consists of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu all these three put together form the trinity Gods. According to the Hindu calendar this festival is celebrated in Phalguna which generally falls in the month of February end or beginning of March or the first week of March.

This festival usually comes before the start of summer or we can say that the winter goes away after this festival. Maha Shivrathi means the Great night of Shiva.

This is not only observed by Hindus in India but also Hindus in Bangladesh, Mauritius, and Nepal South Africa and so on. This festival is usually held on the 13th day of the waning of the Moon and 14th day of the beginning of the month Phalguna. The celebration includes people staying awake the whole night this is known as jaagaran, people chant mantra the most important mantra being Om Namah Shiva.

They usually go to the temple in the evening and offer flowers, leaves and fruits to Lord Shiva they also pour milk on the Shiva Lingam many of the devotees spend the whole night in the temple reciting mantras of Lord Shiva. This festival symbolizes one coming out of darkness to the light hence overcoming ignorance, this is also said to be the night when Lord Shiva and Parvathi got married.

Many people practice meditation, fasting and yoga. This festival is particularly important to the Shaivism part of Hinduism. Most of the Hindu festivals are celebrated in the day but this festival is celebrated in the night. There are twelve jyothir Lingas all over India many devotees go to one of the jyothir Lingas to have the darshan of Lord Shiva. To name a few Varanasi, Somnatha and Rameshvaram and so on. A visit to one of the Jyothir Lingas is considered to be very auspicious.

Thus, these temples are thronged with people on this festival day. All over this festival is celebrated with great grandeur. As one story of this festival celebration is Shiva danced all night a heavenly dance for preservation and destruction, thus there are many dance festivals held in many temples like Konark, Khajuraho, Modhera and Chidambaram.

It is also said that if one meditates on this day then that person could experience Nirvana or enlightenment of our existence.

It is said that on this day because of the positioning of the earth this day has some extra energy to make use of this energy which was in the night incidentally thus it was celebrated as a festival called Maha Shivaratri on this day it is said that Shiva conquered all his enemies. In the yogic tradition Shiva is not considered as God but the first guru or teacher who is also called Adi Guru.

This is also called the night of stillness. Shiva is also referred to as the lap of emptiness as the world has risen from nothing this reference of nothing is Shiva if we can understand this concept then this itself will give us peace. This is one festival which has fasting as the main unlike other festivals which have various cuisines as their main part of the festival.

5.2.4 Rama Navami:

This festival is celebrated also in spring according to the Hindu calendar it is in the month of Chaitra on the ninth day which is called Shukla paksha according to the Hindus which falls either in the last of March or April. Rama is considered to be the seventh avatar of Lord Vishnu. This festival day is the birthday of Lord Rama son of King Dasharatha and Queen Kausalya. Lord Rama was born in Ayodhya on this day people celebrate by doing a fast or read the Ramayana epic or go to the Rama temple and read some mantras related to Lord Rama.

Important celebrations take place in Ayodhya and Sita Samahit sthal in Uttar Pradesh, Sitamarhi in Bihar, and Rameshvaram in Tamil Nadu and so on. Rama was born in the Treta Yuga which had wars between Gods and the Demons. This denotes the end of bad powers and interence of divine power due to the birth of Lord Rama.

Devotees keep a fast for Rama but this is not compulsory this is optional, some go to the sacred river Sarayu which is situated on the banks of Ayodhya, to take a dip, some go to the Rama temple and some read the Ramayana as it is considered auspicious to read this holy book. This is celebrated on the last day of Vasantha Navaratri where for nine days devotees fast from morning to evening on the ninth day of this Navaratri Lord Rama was born.

For this function people usually make a drink made of ginger and jaggery, and also some buttermilk because these two drinks are the favorite of Rama. This drink is then had by all the family members and also those who visit the family. There is no elaborate pooja which is conducted. Everybody chants Rama, Rama on this day. Especially devotees of the Vaishnava sect follow this festival religiously. The idol of Rama is washed and new clothes are put for Him and his brother Lakshman and his consort Sita. In this Kali Yuga it is believed that Lord Rama is our soul Sita is our mind, Hanuman is our living force and Ravana is our ego. It is said that if we breathe properly and listen to our mind then we that is the soul and mind can reunite that is Rama and Sita can reunite by this our ego is destroyed that is Ravana.

Thus, in this way the festival is celebrated and it is a joyous occasion for all the Hindu devotees there are no hard and fast rule to follow all the customs/rites and rituals if one want then he can follow this is not imposed on anybody.

5.2.5 Onam:

This festival is usually celebrated in Kerala and it falls in the month of Chingam according to the Malayalam calendar. This falls usually in the month of August/September depending on their calendar. This is an annual festival also known as the New Year for the Malayali's or also the time of harvest. There are many festivities which are celebrated like the boat race, phookolam or flower Rangoli, Kummattikali or mask dance and so on. It is the official state holiday in Kerala. This is the story of the grandson of Prahalad called Mahabali he is said to have conquered all the three worlds and was ruling the world very well but the Devas wanted back their world so they went to Lord Vishnu and asked for help Vishnu came to visit Mahabali who was conducting a huge homa or yagna this he did after he won the war with the Gods.

And Mahabali also proclaimed that he would grant anyone a boon if the person asked him during the yagna so Lord Vishnu went to his Kingdom in a disguise of a dwarf called Vamana the fifth avatar of Vishnu (he actually wanted to test the devotion of Mahabali) Mahabali was very happy to see the dwarf he offered the boy gold, cows, elephants, villages or anything the boy wished for to this the boy replied that one must not take more than one needs so he asked for three pieces of land which Mahabali readily accepted to give as soon as he said this the Vamana rose to such an enormous height that he could acquire only two pieces of land for the third Mahabali offered his head to this Vishnu was very happy with his devotion so he granted Mahabali a boon that on this day he could come and visit his land once a year this is marked as the onam festival. The last day of his that is Mahabali's stay is celebrated with a nine-course meal called the Onasadya. This nine-course meal is still followed today. This is incidentally celebrated by Malayali Christians as well. This festival is celebrated for ten days the first and the last day are important. The ladies wear the Kerala sari known as the Kasavu sari. The mark of the beginning of the festival is the procession of the elephant which usually starts from Thrippunithura near Kochi. The temple in Ernakulam district is dedicated to Lord Vishnu in the dwarf form called Vamana.

Flower Rangoli or Phookolam is a tradition which has been done since generations these are put in front of one's home and also in the temples. Lamps are arranged around the kolam. This kolam starts on the first day of the festival and the Rangoli slowly increases in size the flowers used for this traditional Rangoli are yellow flowers but now a days people use other colors, there are intricate patterns which are put this is similar to the ones in powder Rangoli.

Kathakali dance is usually performed in temples during this time Kathakali is a famous dance form of Kerala. Then the people make traditional dishes which are served on banana leaves some of them invite their friends and relatives to join them for this onam meal this is the most important custom of the Onam festival. People also buy new clothes, everybody is in a festive mood and there are a lot of singing and dancing. This brings together all the family members relatives and friends. People also install the idol of Vamana the avatar of Vishnu in their homes. These customs/rites and rituals are being done from the ancient times which dates back to thousands of years.

5.2.6 Navaratri or Dussehra or Durga Pooja:

This is a nine-day festival which celebrated by Hindus throughout India this falls in the month of Ashvin according to the Hindu calendar. This is celebrated for nine nights and ten days this festival is dedicated to the goddesses it is also called Sharada Navaratri the most divine Goddess is Durga and her nine avatars. Each day is associated with one of her avatars. This festival falls either in the month of September or October. As the legend goes it is that Lord Rama wins the battle against Ravana so to celebrate this victory this festival Dussehra is celebrated it is also called the win of good over evil which is mentioned in the Ramayana or Devi Mahatmya. On the last day of the Dussehra the epic of Ramayana is enacted where the victory of Rama over Ravana is highlighted this is usually conducted in huge grounds where there are mandaps erected and where many people could come and see the drama and after the celebrations there are three effigies are erected one is Kumbhakarna the brother of Ravana, Meghnath the son of Ravana and Ravana himself, all these three effigies are burnt down signifying the win of good over evil these effigies are filled with crackers and then burnt down this tradition is mainly more in the north of India.

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Hundreds of people come together to witness this burning of the effigies. This commemorates the victory of good over evil.

This is celebrated in many different ways some fast during these ten days some only feast during these ten days. For Bengalis it is called as Durga pooja marks the battle of Goddess Durga who wages war against Maheshasvera who a demon in the form of a buffalo was, she wins the battle against this buffalo thus people celebrate it as Durga pooja, thus, a huge Durga is erected in each society this is very famous in West Bengal, in Nepal is called Dasain which also denotes the bringing together of family, relatives and friends. The last three days of Dussehra are termed as Saptami, Ashtami and Navami. The ending of Dussehra is termed as Vijayadashami (Vijaya means victory, dashmi means the tenth day). On the ninth day Goddess Saraswathi is worshipped she is known as the goddess of learning all Hindus mostly keep their books near Saraswathi to bless them for better ways to learn or to give them better education. On this day people also worship all their tools and instruments etc this is also termed as Ayudha pooja. In the south of India people keep dolls which are usually made of mud this is called as Golu they also invite ladies and girls they make sweets and a traditional dish made out of pulses to which coconut is added along with betel leaves coconut supari and bananas this is given to all the girls and ladies who visit their home.

During these ten days everyone is in a festive mood and all the traditional sweets and savories are made and distributed among near and dear people, some people buy new clothes this is optional. All the customs/rites/rituals practiced are done from generations though it may be slightly different between each community for example in the south of India the cuisines may be different from what is prepared in the north of India though there is differentiation the main celebration remains the same. So, this festival is also a very colorful and joyous.

5.2.7 Ganesh Chaturthi:

Lord Ganesh is known as the God who would remove all the obstacles one faces in life thus whenever a pooja is conducted the Hindus first start it with a pooja to Ganesh he is the son of Lord Shiva and Parvathi. He is also termed as the elephant headed God. As the legend goes the day Ganesh was brought to this world from Mount Kailash that day is celebrated as Ganesh Chaturthi. This festival is celebrated all over India, in Maharashtra the celebrations are more intense this festival in a grand style was started by Chakrapathi Shivaji in the 18th century and was promoted by Balgangadar Tilak during the British rule when the British said that no Hindu festivals should be celebrated in public. Now a days this festival is celebrated in a grand way where each society buys huge Ganeshas made of clay or mud this is then kept for ten days then after that is immersed in the sea or river according to the legend when the Ganesha is put in the water He melts or dissolves in the water and goes back to Mount Kailash where his parents reside. This festival falls in the month of Bhadrapada according to the Hindu calendar that is in the month of August or sometimes September. When the idol is installed the family, members do pooja and lot of special kind of traditional food is prepared and offered to everyone if the idol is in a society then the society members join hands and make a lot of traditional dishes which are given to everyone in the society on this day the preparation of the Modhaka is usually done because this is the favorite food of the Lord Ganesh.

There are also offerings of flowers, sweets, rice, coconut, and jaggery and so on. He is cared for like a family member according to the Hindus. Many Vedic hymns are recited from the religious texts like the Ganesh Upanishad.

Here again there is no hard and fast rules to follow all the customs and rituals it is how one wants to celebrate and how one wants to make all the dishes mentioned to make or only what one can that is solely decided by the devotee.

When a huge Ganesh or a small one at home is placed usually on a raised platform which is called pranapratishtha this is a ritual to invoke Ganesh. This festival today is celebrated by all Hindus worldwide.

5.2.8 Tamil New Year/Vishu or Ugadi:

This Tamil New Year is the first day according to the Tamil calendar in the month of Chithrai in the Tamil calendar this usually falls on the 14th of April every year sometimes it may come on the 15th of April. This is called Vishu in Kerala, Baisakhi or Vaisakhi in central or northern India. This festival is also observed in Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Malaysia and Singapore. This is a fun time for all the Hindu families which celebrate this festival people buy new clothes and seek the blessing of the elders the family lamp is lit and for the pooja flowers, fruits and sweets are offered which are later on distributed among the family members. And then the whole family sit down for a family vegetarian feast which is made up of traditional cuisines which are handed down by the ancestors of the family.

The rituals/customs also are handed down for hundreds of years this tradition continues. The Hindus also go to the temple on this day to seek the blessings of God for a good year ahead. In Kerala the practice of Vishu Kani is there when the youngsters seek the blessings of the elders at that time the elders give some money this money given is known as Vishu Kani. The Tamil speaking greet one another by saying Tamil Puthandu Nalvaazhthugal.

People put kolams in front of their house with colored rice powders or the traditional kolam which is of rice flour (which is made with soaked rice and ground to a fine paste). Ugadi this is the New Year to the people of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The traditions, customs and rituals are same to that of the Tamil new year the dishes of traditional made recipes may be a bit different not much but a little for them also it is a joyous occasion where the family gets together to celebrate this festival.

5.2.9 Krishna Janmashtami:

This festival is also called Gokulashtami, celebrates the birth of Krishna who was the eighth avatar of Vishnu according to the Hindu calendar it falls in the month of Shraavana or Bhadrapad depending on whether the full moon or the new moon is taken into account on the basis of this the date of this festival is decided which falls either in August/September. People celebrate this festival by fasting till midnight either at home or they go to a nearby temple and participate in the singing of bhajans in the name of Krishna some temples may also have dancing festivals to celebrate the birth of Lord Krishna. Some even enact the life and times of Krishna in a dance-drama form called Krishna Lila or Ram Lila.

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According to the Vaishnavism Lord Krishna is known as the supreme Godhead he is the son of Devaki and Vasudev who were held as captive in Mathura by his uncle Kamsa who heard from a sage that he would die at the hands of his sisters eighth child or son who was named Krishna, because of this Kamsa killed all the new born babies born to Devaki because of this Vasudev took his new born child to Gokul and handed over the child to Nanda and Yashoda. Nanda was a friend to Vasudev.

Thus Krishna was born in Mathura and brought up in Gokul by his foster parents his childhood was very happy as he was brought with lot of love and affection when he grew up and came to know about the virtues of his evil uncle time came for him to visit his evil uncle he went to the palace and killed his evil uncle by pulling his hair while taking him from the throne his power was so much that when Krishna pulled him by his hair he died on the spot.

He then freed his parents Vasudev and Devaki and also his grandfather Ugrasena who then became the king of Mathura. Krishna played a major role in the book of Mahabratha he was the pivotal cause of good winning over evil, his discourse on the battlefield to Arjun is called as the Bhagwat Gita which is considered to be a sacred book of the people following Hinduism. Thus, this festival is celebrated all over India they also have a pot breaking game because Krishna used to love butter so much that he used to steal butter from the ladies of the village of Gokul.

He was also referred to as Makanchor fondly thus, this game in his honor. In this festival also, many traditional dishes are made and people also offer white butter because this was the favorite of Lord Krishna. Now a days because of the ISKON temples the greatness of Lord Krishna has reached worldwide and people have become followers of Krishna even foreigners have joined the ISKON philosophy of the Krishna conscious group.

5.2.10 Diwali:

This is one of the most famous festivals for the Hindus, this festival is also known as the festival of lights according to the Hindu calendar it falls on the month of Kartika which is between mid-October and mid-November. This festival symbolizes the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance and good over evil. The main Goddess which is prayed to is the Goddess Lakshmi who stands for prosperity and wealth. The date always varies according to the Hindu calendar it mostly occurs on Amavasya of the month of Kartika. This festival is mentioned in the Padma Purana and the Skanda Purana these sacred books belongs to the second half of the second half of the first millennium CE. According to one legend it describes the victory of Krishna against Narakasura who an evil king in the place Pragjyotishapura near present day Assam was he had 16,000 girls as captive who were released after Krishna won the war against Narakasura. Thus, the victory of good over evil. Another legend is the coming of Lord Rama after he came back to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile and after rescuing Sita and defeating Ravana as Sita was in captive in Sri Lanka here also there was victory of good over evil.

The age-old traditions continue even today, even when the Hindus were under the power of the Mughals, they also supported the celebrations of the Hindus especially Akbar but one of them did not support that is Aurangzeb.

This festival is also called Deepavali. People on this day decorate their house with flowers and put colorful Rangoli and make a lot of savories and sweets which are distributed among relatives and friends by the family members. This is a joyous occasion for the Hindus where they buy new clothes for the whole family and decorate the whole house with lamps or divas and make traditional sweets and savories which are made in the family from generations in the southern India people take an oil bath on this day and then wear the new clothes. They all that is family members sit down to have a traditional lunch this festival is from the previous night to the next day if there are newlyweds in the house then the function becomes even more grand as even friends and relatives are invited for the traditional lunch which in south is usually served on banana leaves. The girl's father buys new clothes for his daughter and son-in-law this is a custom which is followed especially by the South Indians. In the Northern India people do the Lakshmi pooja for prosperity and goodwill of all members of their house. Even some of the Hindu temples were lite with small or big lamps which would make the temple look very beautiful especially at night. Even Jains, Sikhs and Newar Buddhists celebrate this festival with the same joyous mood though there may be a slight difference in following the age-old tradition. Some people even get their house whitewashed before the coming of the festival Diwali. People burst crackers on this day but now a day's people do not burst crackers as they used to before because of pollution of the environment but the lighting of lamps is still there Hindus all over the world light lamps. This festival also symbolizes the awakening of the inner light within all of us.

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Kripa-Drishti Publications
A-503 Poorva Heights, Pashan-Sus Road, Near Sai Chowk,
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