

# **For CMAT Exam**

## **FESTIVALS OF INDIA**

### **NATIONAL FESTIVALS**

These are celebrated on the occurrence of great historical events of national importance. Inculcates a strong feeling of patriotism in the minds of Indians.

India celebrates three National Festivals namely:

- 26th January - Republic Day.
- 15th August - Independence Day.
- 2nd October - Gandhi Jayanti.

### **RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS**

#### **Diwali or Deepawali**

- Festival of lights.
- Celebrated on the New moon (Amavasya) day in the month of Kartik which generally falls in October and November.
- The day before the festival is called Naraka Chaturdashi.

#### **Dev Deepawali**

- Celebrated in Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh).
- Celebrated 15 days after Diwali.
- People have a tradition of lighting lamps on the ghats of River Ganga there.
- It is also observed as Tripura Purnima Snan.

#### **Holi**

- Festival of Colours.
- It falls in the month of Phalguna (February-March).
- It signifies the win of good over evil, i.e. burning of Holika and saving of Bhakt Prahlad.
- In West Bengal and parts of Assam, it is known as Dol Jatra.

#### **Makar Sankranti**

- Dedicated to Sun God, it celebrates the transition of the Sun in the Northern hemisphere.
- The festival is celebrated in the month of January.
- People undergo a pilgrimage to Gangasagar (in West Bengal) and to Prayagraj.
- At some places in India, it is also celebrated as the Kite Flying Festival.

#### **Janamasthami**

- It celebrates the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna.
- Generally falls in the month of August.

### **Dussehra**

- Also known as Vijaya Dashmi.
- It is celebrated in India to honour the victory of Lord Rama over Ravana.
- Ravana Dahan is a common feature observed during this day especially in North India.

### **Durga Puja**

- It is majorly celebrated in the Eastern part of India (especially West Bengal).
- It is to celebrate Goddess Durga's triumph over demon Mahishasura.

### **Ganesh Chaturthi**

- It celebrates the birth anniversary of Lord Ganesha.
- It is the main festival of Maharashtra.

### **Rath Yatra (Chariot Festival)**

- Biggest festival of Odisha.
- Dedicated to three deities – Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra (his brother) and Subhadra (his sister). The chariot festival or Ratha Yatra of Puri is the largest and very famous.

### **Chhath Puja**

- It is the main festival of Bihar and Jharkhand.
- Celebrated to honour Sun Goddess.
- It is observed after days of rigorous fasting followed by holy bath and offerings to Sun Goddess.

### **Nabakalebar festival**

- Observed at Shri Jagannath temple, Puri (Odisha).
- Nabakalebar means new body, i.e. the idols of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan are replaced with new idols.
- In March 2018, the President of India released Rs 1000 and Rs 10 commemorative coins on the occasion of Nabakalebar festival.

### **Eid-ul-Fitr**

- The festival falls after the last day of the holy month of Ramadan (Ramzan), which is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.
- During the month of Ramadan, people fast for the entire day, beginning from the sunrise to the sunset.
- Historically Prophet Muhammad achieved victory during the Battle of Badr that led to the victory of the city of Mecca during this month.
- Furthermore, the martyrdom of the prophet's son-in-law Ali occurred on the 21st day of Ramadan (Ramzan).

### **Eid-ul-Zuha or Eid-al-Adha**

- This is also known as Bakr-Eid or the Id that involves the sacrifice of a goat or Bakra.
- It is celebrated in honour of the Prophet Ibrahim's devotion to Allah, which was tested when God asked him to sacrifice his son.

### **Milad-un-Nabi**

- Also known as the Barah-wafat. Birth anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad.
- This is also supposed to be the day when the Prophet departed from earth.
- The festival is called Barah (12) wafat (death) as it signifies the 12 days of sickness that led to the Prophet Muhammad's death.

### **Muharram**

- It is observed in the memory of the martyrdom of Hussain Bin Ali, the grandson of the Prophet in the war at Karbala in 61 Hijri (680 AD).
- Also known as the Yaum-al-Ashura.
- In India, people take out processions called Tajia and beat themselves with chains to replicate the pains taken by Hussain.

### **Christmas**

- Birth anniversary of Jesus Christ.
- It falls on the 25th December every year.
- The celebrations begin with the midnight mass that is held at all the churches on the night of the 24th -25th December, which signifies the birth of Christ at midnight.

### **Easter**

- This is the day celebrated for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- According to the Bible, three days after Jesus was crucified, he was resurrected.
- Easter is supposed to signify the triumph of life over death.

### **Good Friday**

- The festival of Good Friday is to commemorate the day of crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
- It falls in the month of April each year.
- The death of Jesus is considered necessary for his rebirth and hence, it is a good sign and gives hope to human beings.

### **Gurpurab**

- Celebrated for the birth anniversaries of all the 10 Sikh gurus.
- The most important are Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.
- Other important Gurpurabs are to commemorate the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur, who lost their lives to the Mughals.
- The Sikh community celebrates Guru Nanak Jayanti on the occasion of Guru Nanak's birthday. All the Gurudwaras hold special services and langar is distributed to people on this day.

### **Maghi**

- It is celebrated on 14 January every year.
- It is celebrated in Muktsar in the memory of forty Sikh martyrs (Chalis Mukte) who fought with the Mughals.
- The 10th Guru Govind Singh died while fighting with Wazir Khan, the mughal emperor in 1705. The Sikhs take a procession to the site of this Sikh – Muslim War and take a bath in the sacred water of Muktsar.

### **Hola Mohalla**

- It often takes place in the month of March and is held in Anandpur Sahib.
- It was started by Guru Govind Singh for mock battles and military exercises followed by kirtan and other poetry competitions.

- Also known as “Sikh Olympics” for the events and competitions of horse riding, swordsmanship, etc.

### **Vaisakhi/Baisakhi**

- It is a religious festival celebrated on 13 or 14 April every year.
- Celebrates the sikh new year and birthday of Khalsa Panth.
- This is the spring harvest festival for the Sikhs.
- Gurudwaras are decorated and hold kirtans. Sikhs take a bath in the sacred river, visit temples, meet friends and party over festive foods.

### **Lohri**

- This occasion is celebrated on 13 January in the month of Magh, a day before Makar Sankranti.
- Lohri celebrates fertility and the spark of life. People gather around the bonfires, throw sweets, puffed rice and popcorn into the flames, sing popular songs and exchange greetings.
- It also signifies the victory of light over the darkness.

### **Mahavir Jayanti**

- Birth anniversary of Lord Mahavira who was the 24th Tirthankara.
- Jain temples are decorated with the saffron flag.
- The idol of Mahavira is washed with milk and given a ceremonial bath (abhishek).

### **Paryushana**

- It is celebrated for eight days in the month of Bhadrapada (August/September) by the Svetambara sect. The Digambara sect celebrates the festival for ten days.
- The festival marks the movement of the nomadic Jain monks to their retreats because of the torrential rain and monsoon showers that makes their residence in forests and caves to be impossible.
- The festivities include the ritual visit to the temples or the Upashrayas and listening to the discourses on Kalpa Sutra.

### **Mahamastakabhisheka**

- It is held once in 12 years in the town of Shravanabelagola in Karnataka.
- This festival is the holy bathing ceremony of the 57 ft high statue of Siddha Bahubali, son of Rishabhdev.

### **Gyana Panchami**

- It is considered knowledge day.
- On this day Holy Scriptures are displayed and worshipped under Jainism.

### **Buddha Purnima**

- Birth anniversary of Lord Buddha.
- It falls in the month of April/ May.
- Also called Saga Dawa (Dasa) in Sikkim and Vishakha Puja in the Theravada tradition.

- The main areas of celebration in Northern India are Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh and Bodhi Gaya in Bihar. The day also includes chanting of Buddhist scriptures, worshipping the image of Buddha and the Bodhi tree and meditation.
- Mahayana Buddhists organise a large procession with musical instruments like gyalings. They also read Kangyur texts.
- Theravada Buddhists only concentrate on offering ceremonial prayers to the idols of Buddha.

### **Songkran**

- This Buddhist festival is observed like a spring cleaning.
- It is celebrated for several days during the middle of April.
- People clean their house, wash clothes and enjoy sprinkling perfumed water on the monks.

### **Ullambana**

- This occasion is celebrated from the 1st to the 15th day of the eighth lunar month.
- It is believed that the gates of Hell are opened on the first day and the ghosts may visit the world for fifteen days.
- Food offerings are made during this time to relieve the sufferings of these ghosts.
- On the 15th day, (Ullambana or Ancestor Day), people visit cemeteries to make offerings to the departed souls.

### **Hemis Gompa**

- The festival is held at the Hemis Gompa Monastery in Ladakh to celebrate the birth anniversary of Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava).
- In order to protect his people, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism, Guru Padmanasambhava fought the evil forces and thus this festival celebrates the victory of good over evil.
- The main attraction of the festival is the mask dance performed by the Lamas.
- Numerous musicians play the traditional music using four pairs of cymbals, large-pan drums, small trumpets and large size wind instruments.

### **Jamshedi Navroz**

- The festival of Navroz is to celebrate the festival of New Year for the Parsi Community.
- It is supposed to be the beginning of the Universal Dawn as this is the end of winter and the beginning of the New Year.
- Traditionally Parsis pay respect to Khorshed and MeherYazads who are the two divine beings that are the harbingers of Sun.
- People visit each other and visit the Fire Temple.

### **Khajuraho Dance Festival**

- The Government of India in collaboration with the Madhya Pradesh Kala Parishad instituted this festival in 1975.

- This festival of Dance promotes tourism in the State and highlights the beauty and eroticism inherent in the Khajuraho temples.
- The festival is also supposed to reflect the spirit of eternal glory and perseverance of dance and architectural monuments, which reflect our cultural heritage.

### **Traditional New Year**

- Mark the beginning of a new Hindu calendar.
- It is celebrated under different names like:
  1. Ugadi or Chaitra Suddha Padyami - Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka
  2. Gudi Padwa or Gudi Padvo - Maharashtra
  3. Samvatsar Padvo - Goa
  4. Naba Barsha (Poila Baisakh) - West Bengal
  5. Puthandu - Tamil Nadu
  6. Vishu - Kerala.

### **Tyagaraja Aradhana**

- It commemorates the 'Samadhi' day of the famous Telugu Saint and composer Tyagaraja.
- It is held in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, primarily at Thiruvaiyaru (where he attained Samadhi).

### **Onam**

- State festival of Kerala.
- It is a harvest festival.
- It also celebrates the homecoming of mighty asura King Mahabali from Patala (the underground).
- A prominent feature of Onam is the Vallam Kali (the Snake Boat race).
- The most popular Vallamkali is held in the Punnamada Lake and the winners are awarded the Nehru Boat Race Trophy. Traditional games, known as Onakanikal also form a part of the Onam celebrations.

### **Pongal**

- It is a four day harvest festival celebrated by Tamils.
- It is celebrated in January and marks the beginning of Uttarayan, i.e. six month northward journey of the Sun.
- The word 'Pongal' means 'to boil' in Tamil and the boiling of the first rice is an important ritual obeyed during the festival.

### **Sarhul**

- It marks the beginning of the New Year for the tribals of Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.
- Mainly celebrated by the Munda, Oraon and Ho tribes.
- Tribals hold nature in great reverence and Mother Earth is worshipped during the festival.

- Traditional dance Sarhul is performed.
- It is related to religion called “Sarnaism”.

### **Saga Dawa (Triple Blessed Festival)**

- It is mostly celebrated in the Buddhist communities living in the State of Sikkim.
- It is celebrated to commemorate the birth, enlightenment and death (parinirvana) of Buddha.
- People have to follow three teachings of Buddhism: generosity (dana), morality (sila), and meditation or good feelings (bhavana).

### **Losoong Festival**

- Sikkimese New year festival.
- It is the celebration of the harvest season by the farmers and other occupational communities.
- Traditionally, it is considered to be the festival of the Bhutia tribe but now- a-days even the Lepchas celebrate it with equal vigour and joy.
- People drink the locally brewed wine, called Chaang.
- People perform traditional dances like the Cham Dance and the Black Hat dance at the monasteries.

### **Bihu Festival**

- It is a set of three important non-religious festivals of Assam -
  1. Bohag or Rongali Bihu (falls on Assamese New Year in April)
  2. Kati or Kongali Bihu
  3. Maagh or Bhogali Bihu
- Songs and dances are the main attractions during Bihu.
- The festival of Bihu is traditionally tied to the changing seasons and harvests.

### **Hornbill Festival**

- Celebrated in Nagaland.
- It is a 10 day festival that begins on 1st December every year.
- All the major Naga tribes attend this festival and congregate at the Kisama Heritage Village.

### **Moatsu Mong Festival**

- It is celebrated by the Ao tribe of Nagaland in the first week of May after sowing is done.
- The festival provides them a period of recreation and entertainment after the stressful work of clearing fields, burning jungles, sowing seeds, etc.
- A part of the celebration is Sangpang where a big fire is lit and women and men sit around it.

### **Kharchi Puja**

- This Hindu festival primarily originates from the State of Tripura.

- While it began as a festival of the royal family of Tripura, currently even the common households celebrate this festival.
- The festival is celebrated in the honour of Earth and to worship 14 other deities.

#### **Cheiraoba Festival**

- New Year festival of Manipur tribes.
- Also related to the domestic deity called Sanamahi worshipped by the Meitei tribe.

#### **Wangala Festival (The 100 Drums Festival)**

- Garo Tribe celebrates it in Meghalaya.
- The festival indicates the beginning of winter and is celebrated as a nod to the post harvest season.
- The festival is celebrated in the honour of 'Misi Saljong', a local deity who is considered to be generous.
- A distinct feature is the feathered head-gear that is worn by everyone celebrating the festival and also reflects their clan's colour.

#### **Kang Chingba (Ratha Yatra of Manipur)**

- Celebrated in the State of Manipur.
- It is similar to the 'Jagannath Puri Rath Yatra'.
- The Yatra begins from the very famous holy temple of Sri Govindajee situated in Imphal.
- It is a 10 days long festival that is celebrated in the month of July every year.

#### **Ambubachi Mela**

- It is held at Kamakhya temple of Guwahati in the State of Assam.
- Dubbed as the 'Mahakumbh of the East'.
- The festival has been associated with fertility rituals and many devotees come to seek the blessing of a child from the Goddess.

#### **Majuli Festival**

- Held at Majuli in the State of Assam.
- The Department for Culture of Assam organises various events during the festival like the seminars which highlights the traditional history and glory of Assam in general, and Majuli in particular.

#### **Lui-Ngai-Ni Festival**

- Celebrated by Naga tribes in Nagaland and Manipur.
- It is rejoiced as the mark for seed-sowing season.

#### **Dree Festival**

- The Apatani tribe that reside in Arunachal Pradesh celebrates the festival.
- One of the biggest celebrations held in the Ziro valley.
- People offer prayers and offerings to four main Gods: Tamu, Metii, Medvr, Danyi and Mepin.



**Losar Festival**

- Celebrated in Arunachal Pradesh mainly by the Monpa tribe.