



The main event of the celebration is *Sangpangtu*, where both men and women dress up in their best and traditional attire and sit around a fire-eating meat and sipping wine.

Close to the picturesque terrains of north-eastern India, the plains Odisha and adjoining regions observe celebrations through the worship of another goddess. This is the celebration of Sital Sashti in the month of May. This is a festival that celebrates the marriage of Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva- providing a myriad platform for varied folk artists to perform their dying art forms in Odisha. Especially in Sambalpur in Odisha, these performances are part of a carnival-like marriage procession, which also features the deities. The festival is popularly believed to have begun around 400 years ago and is held to encourage an upcoming abundant monsoon (Shiva is believed to represent the scorching summer heat and Parvati the first rain).



Towards the hilly terrains of western India, the first week of the month of May is also a time for welcoming summer in and around the regions of Mount Abu in Rajasthan. This is the celebration of the Mount Abu Summer Festival and is attended by

various tourists from across the Indian subcontinent as well as abroad. This festival is observed through traditional ballad singing and folk dancing and also often through boat racing on the Nakki Lake. The festival concludes with firework displays and an important part of the festival is the Sham-e-Qawwali (evening of qawwali music) musical show, which features some of the most renowned qawwalis from various parts of India.



Summer harvest across the Indian subcontinent comes with its bountiful share of not only crops, but myriad fruits as well. With the onset of the months of *Baisakh* and *Jaishthya*- the Indian subcontinent also witnesses a spurt in the many mango festivals from across the region. Being an indigenous fruit, they are available in plenty, with each region having its speciality in taste, texture and sweetness. The mango season generally onsets by March and by May, the fruit is sweet and juicy and a delicacy that is craved across palates in as many varied forms as there are dishes to be served- starting from the hors d'oeuvres to the desserts at the end of meals as well as fast food options.

As the fauna is celebrated across the nation, there are festivals which also celebrate the variety of flora and one of the most famous festivals takes place in the hill station in Tamil Nadu each year in Ooty. This is the Ooty Summer Festival. The significant events of the festival include a Spice Show at Gudalur, a Vegetable Show at Nehru Park in Kotagiri, Rose Show at the Government Rose Garden, Fruit Show at Sim's Park in Coonoor and the famous Flower Show at Ooty



Botanical Gardens. An interesting night bazaar is also held at the Commercial Road. To get to the location, the eternal attraction lies in the Nilgiri Mountain Railway Toy Train, which, along with the Darjeeling Toy Train of West Bengal, forms an important part of the 38 UNESCO World Heritage Sites of India.

In the southern Indian state of Kerala, a significant reminder of the agricultural month of *Grishma* is the celebration of the Thrissur Poomam at the Vadakkunnathan Temple in Thrissur. This is a widely celebrated famous festival and is held on the day when the moon rises with an auspicious star as per the Hindu calendar. This coincides with the Gregorian months of end of April to mid-May and differs each year. The festival is believed to have been started by Raja Rama Varma, the Maharaja of Cochin. The festival features a grand procession, colourful parasols and elephants decked with traditional attire. The festival commences on the morning of the Kanimangalam Shasta. The procession signifies the processions of the deities from the two temples of Paramekkavu



and Thiruvambadi temples, while Vadukunnathan Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, remains a spectator during the festival and it is within the premises of this temple that the festival is held. By noon, the festival reaches its most significant part, when the processions of the Thiruvambady Shri Krishna and Paramekkavu Devi temples face each other. The dazzling and highly appreciated classic performance of musical instruments called Elanjithara Melam begins when the procession reaches the Elanji tree inside the temple compound. The traditional percussion ensembles such as Pancharimelam, Pandimelam and Panchavadyam render an important touch to the occasion.

Through the various agricultural festivals in summer, life and nature renews itself once again. The auspicious occasions of Rabindra Jayanti and Buddha Purnima Vesak, connects the many myriad occasions from across India into one palette of celebration. Thus, the auspicious occasions prepare the ground for the upcoming season for a bountiful harvest and agriculture.



#### Introduction of author

Dr. Lopamudra Maitra Bajpai has been researching and writing on South Asian history, popular culture and intangible cultural heritage for nearly one and a half decades. With twenty-five international research papers to her credit in various books and journals, she has represented India on several occasions at different international platforms, including the IOV-UNESCO conference in Sharjah (April, 2019), where she was adjudged the best presenter worldwide. She continues to teach at various international universities. Her latest book- "Stories of the Colonial Architecture: Kolkata-Colombo", released at the Kolkata International Book Fair, 2019, follows an extensive research in Kolkata (India) and Colombo (Sri Lanka) as a Research Grant Fellow of the India- Sri Lanka Foundation of the Indian High Commission, Sri Lanka.

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## Cultural Tapestry

The varied agricultural festivals in India- connecting to the auspicious occasions of

### Rabindra Jayanti and Buddha Purnima Vesak celebrations.

Source : Dr. Lopamudra Maitra Bajpai

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**Rabindranath Tagore with a plough at Sriniketan, near Shantiniketan (1929).**

<https://www.anandabazar.com/editorial/agricultural-planning-of-rabindranath-tagore-at-sriniketan-1.962189>  
(From the Anandabazaar Patrika, March 6, 2019).

**There it comes—Baisakh's seasonal thundershower Enveloping the evening sky! What or who do you fear? Open all doors everywhere Listen to the sky rumble intensely and its loud insistent call. Respond to its overture with song-lyrics and melodies Let whatever shakable shake; let anything transient go! Let everything fragile shatter; let only the permanent stay!**

#### A translated version of poem *Oi Bujhi Kalboishakhi* by Rabindranath Tagore

The month of May heralds several new beginnings. As the traditional, agricultural calendar of the Indian sub-continent sets anew the crop-cycle with the months of *Baisakh* and *Jaishthya*- the season of summer or *Grishma* ushers new hope and prepares the ground for a new foundation. Interestingly enough, the month of May is also the time for two important occasions- Rabindra Jayanti and Buddha Purnima and both are also closely connected to the essence and ethos of agriculture, nature and life.



and attainment of Parinirvana (total liberation from the cycle of existence, or passing away) in the life of Buddha. The day in the Gregorian calendar varies each year and is placed on various dates between the end of the month of April till the month of May. With the onset of the month

of May, this article is an attempt to remind us of the several agricultural festivals across the Indian sub-continent, which are blessed and imbued with the presence of such occasions as Rabindra Jayanti and Buddha Purnima Vesak celebrations. The basic ethos of the luminaries, their ideologies and thoughts are reflected as important messages through the many agricultural festivals in the form of unity in diversity, across the Indian subcontinent.

Annual celebrations at Rabindranath Tagore's university- Vishwa Bharati in Shantiniketan (West Bengal), used to historically celebrate the dual occasions of Rabindra Jayanti along with the beginning of the traditional Bengali New Year around the dates of April 14 or 15. This is the time of *Naba Barsho* or New Year and the tradition of this dual celebrations still continues. One of the most significant aspects of the ideologies of Rabindranath Tagore lay in his attempts to bring a closer understanding between education, nature, life and agriculture. He took great measures to bring this essence into his principles at Shantiniketan. Amidst his work for Shantiniketan, were ideologies that reflected these thoughts. As early as 1928, Tagore had established such events at Shantiniketan as *briksharopan* (planting of tree saplings) and *halkarshan* (celebration of ploughing of agricultural fields). He explained these as imperative necessities within the structure of education as they help to spread awareness and knowledge about a fast denuding forest cover and climatic imbalance. He also emphasised the celebration of these events through songs to bring together various communities. These thought processes further echoed and took reflections in the education at

Sriniketan, adjacent to Shantiniketan, where Tagore had set up a centre for agricultural studies. The essence of agriculture, life and nature continued to weave its significant palette in the works of Tagore. Till this day, these thoughts remain as beacons for creating a better understanding of man-nature relationship.



Buddha Purnima

The solemn observation of Buddha Purnima Vesak, on the other hand, is another occasion when once again one is reminded of the significant bond between nature and man. It is a time to honour this sacrosanct relationship as the essence of the preaching of Buddha takes knowledge closer to nature. This close relationship between the preaching and nature can be traced back to the very essence of the life of The Buddha, from which stemmed His teachings. The Buddha spent significant part of his life, including several major events and occasions amidst natural forest. Amidst this, the ideation or the reflections of a tree, became an important and sacred symbol throughout the Buddhist world and continues till date through the representation of the Bodhi tree. Buddha emphasised on the spirit of trees, mountains and water to be synonymous with the existence of man and Buddhist literature always treated nature as part of humans and an extension of human love. These

ideas always linked the preaching and ideals of Buddhism to an attitude of respect for nature. Connecting with the essence and ethos of the preachings from these two important festivals and their representations- is an important message which connects to the larger paradigm of the Indian subcontinent. This is a message for preservation and conservation of nature and life and the blessings of agriculture.

Throughout the month of May, as the ground heats up considerably, preparing the platform for the upcoming monsoon and rainy season, several festivals across the Indian subcontinent helps in the preparation for the upcoming summer harvest. There are many festivals which seek blessings for a blessed monsoon. While some festivals celebrate the bountiful spring and summer flora and fauna, there are many others which mark an occasion to pay homage to deities, forefathers as well as nature. Scattered across the Indian subcontinent, these myriad festivals span a wide region- from the mountainous terrains of the mighty Himalayas to the sacred plains of Kerala and its famous temple festivals and they are seen to be observed throughout the month of May- corresponding to the Indian months of *Baisakh* and *Jaishthya*.

With the Himalayan belt and all the surrounding regions of the area experiencing a break after the harsh winters, the month of May heralds an interesting season before the following monsoon season begins. To start with, this is a welcome time for many trekkers as the months of May and June are considered to be prime times for trekking activities with clear skies and temperate weather. Trekkers often through the steep slopes of Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir and Uttarakhand.



Dhungri Mela

In the region of Manali on the Himalayan belt and by the middle of the month, the three-day long Dhungri Mela takes place to honour the Jayanti or birthday of Goddess Hadimba. According to the mythological story of The Mahabharata, she was the wife of Bhima, one of the five Pandava brothers. The temple of the Goddess is considered as an important landmark of the region and gods and goddesses from surrounding villages are carried in procession to attend the celebrations. The gaiety of the onset of summer is celebrated through a fairground, adorned with various stalls and carnival rides as well as much singing and dancing, especially the folk dance- Kullu Natti. The neighbouring regions of the hilly terrains of north-eastern India witnesses an important festival during this time, which observes the ending of the previous harvest season, before the new agricultural season commences. This is the Moatsu festival, celebrated by the Ao tribe of Chuchuyimlang village in Nagaland (especially Mokokchung District)- around the first week of May. This is an interesting occasion to celebrate the closure of the previous planting season. This is the time to take breather and rejoice amidst the hardwork and prepare for the season ahead. All activities of the festival are associated to harvesting and is observed through traditional singing, dancing, and merry-making.