

Cultural Calendar

Newsletter Issue 64: 13th August – 23rd August 2021

- **13th August – Nag Panchami (Hindu):**



Naga Panchami is a day of traditional worship of Nagas or snakes observed by Hindus. As part of the festivities, a Naga or serpent deity made of silver, stone, wood, or a painting of snakes is given a reverential bath with milk and their blessings are sought for the welfare of the family. Live snakes, especially cobras, are also worshipped on this day, especially with offerings of milk and generally with the assistance of a snake charmer.

- **13th – 16th August – Obon (Buddhist):**



The festival of Obon lasts for three days and is a Japanese Buddhist custom to honour the spirits of one's ancestors.

This Buddhist–Confucian custom has evolved into a family reunion holiday during which people return to ancestral family places and visit and clean their ancestors' graves when the spirits of ancestors are supposed to revisit the household altars. It has been celebrated in Japan for more than 500 years and traditionally includes a dance, known as Bon Odori.

- **15th August – The Assumption of Mary (Christian):**



Roman Catholics believe the doctrine of the Assumption, which teaches that at the end of her life, Mary, the mother of Christ, was taken body and soul into heaven to live with her son, Jesus Christ for ever.

Human beings have to wait until the end of time for their bodily resurrection, but Mary's body was able to go straight to heaven because her soul hadn't been tainted by original sin.

- **18th August – Ashura (Islam):**



The day of Ashura is marked by Muslims as a whole, but for Shia Muslims it is a major religious commemoration of the martyrdom at Karbala of Hussein, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. It is marked by Muslims with a voluntary day of fasting which commemorates the day Noah left the Ark, and the day that Moses was saved from the Egyptians by God. For Shia Muslims, Ashura is a solemn day of mourning the martyrdom of Hussein in 680 AD at Karbala in modern-day Iraq.

- **20th August – Varalakshmi Vratam (Hindu):**



Varalakshmi Vratam is a festival to propitiate the Goddess Lakshmi. Varalakshmi is one who grants boons ("Vara"). It is an important pooja performed by many women in the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. The festival is performed by women for their own well-being and that of all their family members. It is believed that worshipping the Goddess Varalakshmi on this day is equivalent to worshipping Ashtalakshmi – the eight goddesses of Wealth, Earth, Wisdom, Love, Fame, Peace, Contentment, and Strength. Due to the rising popularity of this holy day in some states, it is now being declared as an optional official holiday in India.

- **22nd August – Raksha Bandhan (Hindu):**



Raksha Bandhan is the Hindu festival that celebrates brotherhood and love. It is celebrated on the full moon in the month of Sravana in the lunar calendar.

The word Raksha means protection, whilst Bandhan is the verb to tie. Traditionally, during the festival sisters tie a rakhi, a bracelet made of interwoven red and gold threads, around their brothers' wrists to celebrate their relationship.

Today the festival has developed with others joining in the festivities:

- Priests tie rakhis around the wrists of congregation members.
- Rakhis are often shared between close friends.
- Women tie rakhis around the wrists of the prime minister.
- Rakhis are tied around the wrists of soldiers.

- **22nd August – International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief:**



The UN General Assembly designated 22nd August as the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief recognising the importance of providing victims of acts of violence based on religion or belief and members of their families with appropriate support and assistance in accordance with applicable law.

It strongly deplored all acts of violence against persons on the basis of their religion or belief, as well as any such acts directed against their homes, businesses, properties, schools, cultural centres or places of worship, as well as all attacks on and in religious places, sites and shrines that are in violation of international law.

- **23rd August – International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition:**



The night of 22nd-23rd August 1791, in Santo Domingo (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic) saw the beginning of the uprising that would play a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.

It is against this background that the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is commemorated on 23rd August each year.

This International Day is intended to inscribe the tragedy of the slave trade in the memory of all peoples. In accordance with the goals of the intercultural project "The Slave Route", it should offer an opportunity for collective consideration of the historic causes, the methods and the consequences of this tragedy, and for an analysis of the interactions to which it has given rise between Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean.