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Gangaur



Goddess Gauri

Gangaur is the colourful and the one of the most important festivals of people of Rajasthan and is observed throughout the state with great fervour and devotion by womenfolk who worship Gauri, the consort of Lord Shiva during March-April. It is the celebration of spring, harvest and marital fidelity in Jaipur. Gana is a synonym for Lord Shiva and Gaur which stands for Gauri or Parvati who symbolizes Saubhagya (marital bliss). The unmarried women worship her for being blessed good husband, while married women do so for the welfare, health and long life of their husbands and happy married life.

This ritual is observed to celebrate the triumph of Rao Santhal, ruler of Jodhpur over the cruel Mir Ghudley Khan, who had carried away 140 young girls celebrating the festival of Gangaur, in 1548 AD. The burning lamp symbolizes maharaja's valor and chivalry.

Rites and Rituals

The festival commences on the first day of chaitra, the day following Holi and continues for 18 days. For a newly-wedded girl, it is binding to observe the full course of 18 days of the festival that succeeds her marriage. Even unmarried girls fast for the full period of the 18 days and eat only one meal a day. Festivity consummates on 3rd day of Shukla Paksha of Chaitra Month. Fairs (Gangaur Melas) are held throughout the 18 day period. Numerous folklores are associated with Gangaur which makes this festival deeply ingrained into the hearts of Rajasthan, and parts of MP, Haryana & Gujarat.



Gangaur Pooja

Images of Isar and Gauri are made of clay for the festival. In some Rajput families, permanent wooden images are painted afresh every year by reputed painters called matherans on the eve of festival. A distinct difference between the idols of Teej and Gangaur is that the Idol will have a canopy during the Teej festival while the Gangaur idol would not have a canopy.



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The ladies decorate their hands and feet by drawing designs with Mehndi (myrtle paste). The figures drawn range from the Sun, Moon and the stars to simple flowers or geometrical designs. Ghudlias are earthen pots with numerous holes all around and a lamp lit inside them. On the evening of the 7th day after Holi, unmarried girls go around singing songs of ghudlia carrying the pots with a burning lamp inside, on their heads. On their way, they collect small presents of cash, sweets, jaggery, ghee, oil etc. this continues for 10 days i.e. up to the conclusion of the Gangaur festival when the girls break their pots and throw the debris into the well or a tank and enjoys a feast with the collection made.

The festival reaches its climax during the last three days. The images of Gauri and Isar are dressed in new garments especially made for the occasion. Unmarried girls and married women decorate the images and make them look like living figures.



Girls with Ghudlias

At an auspicious hour in the afternoon, a procession is taken out to a garden, bawdi or johad or well with the images of Isar and Gauri, placed on the heads of married women. Songs are sung about the departure of Gauri to her husband's house. The procession comes back after offering water to the first two days. On the final day, she faces in the same direction as Isar and the procession concludes in the consignment of the all images in the waters of a tank or a well. The women bid farewell to Gauri and turn their eyes and the Gangaur festival comes to an end.

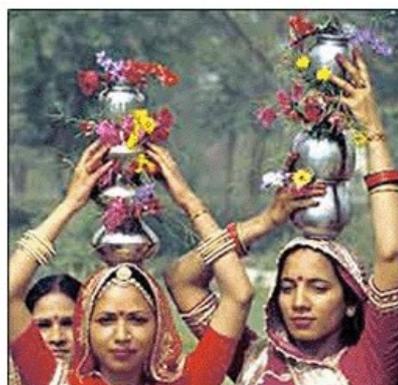


Gangaur Procession

The Gangaur of Jaipur is famous in all over the world. In Jaipur, a sweet dish called a ghewar is characteristic of the Gangaur festival. People buy ghewar to eat and distribute it among their friends and relatives. A procession, with the image of Gauri, commences from the Zanani-Deodhi of the City Palace. It then passes through Tripolia Bazaar, Chhoti Chaupar, Gangauri Bazaar, Chaugan stadium and finally converges near the Talkatora. People from all walks of life come to witness the procession.

Celebrations

There is uniqueness to the festival in different places. In Bikaner, married women and maidens observe fast and prepare sweet dishes for the festival. In Jaipur, 'ghewar' is especially made as a dessert on the Gangaur Festival along with the grand procession of the image of Gauri from the Palace Gate known as Tripolia to Talkatora. Jodhpur has the fair of 'lotias', where thousands of maidens bring water and 'durva' grass in pots made of silver or brass to a place known as Girdikot.



Maidens with lotias

Maidens with 'lotias'

The procession in Nathdwara, lasts for 7 days. Each day, a particular color is chosen for the dress of the goddess with the last day seeing Gauri dressed in black with golden lace work. In Udaipur, the procession ends at the Pichhola Lake, where idols of Isar and Gauri are sent for boating for an hour and then there is majestic display of fireworks on the banks.