

# THE FESTIVALS OF INDIA, *Uniting Her People*

The seasons of harvest are around  
and the time is ripe for the tiller  
to reap from the bosom of Mother Earth,  
the hard earned fruits of his labour  
through the sweat of his brow.

With 'Gratitude' the Sun, Nature and the animals  
who enriched the harvest and filled the granaries in abundance  
are worshipped and honoured along with the visit of legendary King Mahabali.  
Pongal, Makar Sankranti and Onam  
are all of the same theme and nature.

'The Great Night of Shiva' Mahashivaratri,  
the 'lone festival' celebrated at night  
marks the victory over darkness and ignorance.

'Deepavali' commemorates Rama's return to Ayodhya,  
and is celebrated with lighted 'lamps' and firework displays  
to the delight of our hearts and minds!

'Holi, the festival of colours'  
celebrates the triumph of good over evil.  
People sing and dance around the pyre  
to usher in brotherhood joy and camaraderie.

Great is the celebration when Lord Jaganath  
comes for his yearly visit to the 'Gundicha Temple' in Puri!  
He is greeted by the Rathas so mighty with juggernaut wheels  
drawn by multitude of devotees on the 'bada danda'.

Guru or teacher is only next to God!  
He or she deserves reverence and respect  
as much as those who begot us.  
At 'Guru Purima', we remember and thank our teachers and Gurus  
with the prime of place they deserve!

Buddha Purnima is celebrated in remembrance of Lord Buddha  
attaining nirvana in vesak and giving his first sermon  
when the moon was brightest filling to its brim,  
reminding us Buddha's message of compassion and empathy.



Vinayaka is the god of wisdom and intelligence,  
a god of beginning and annihilating obstacles!  
'Vinayaka Chaturti' spreads 'Spiritual flavour'.  
Amidst singing and dancing,  
he returns to the earth with the immersion in water bodies -  
reinforcing the belief- 'The universe is giving way to formlessness'.

'Dussehra' or 'Vijayadasami' is the day of victory  
for 'Lord Rama', 'goddess Durga',  
and 'Pandavas' returning home after exile!  
Goddess Lakshmi, Saraswathi and Durga are worshipped  
during the nine days of celebrations!

'Ramazan' is marked by prayers, fasting,  
spiritual reflection and community get-together,  
begetting, self-discipline, self-control,  
sacrifice and empathy for the have-nots!

As promised, God became 'Incarnate wisdom' in time-  
born as a 'Babe' in Bethlehem  
with the power of God, through his mother 'Blessed Virgin Mary'.  
'Christmas' is a Universal spiritual event and festival  
celebrated by all the people around the world,  
crossing the boundaries of Religion and Countries.

Even after 2000 years, He continues to be born among us  
without being perceived by naked human eyes.  
He is born again among the addressless refugees and migrants,  
and those rejected by the world, living in inhuman conditions.  
He is born in Ukraine and in other war torn countries,  
where the innocent suffer, victims of aggression and greed.  
Shall we welcome Him as He comes again,  
discovering Him with our hearts and inner eyes of wisdom  
to celebrate by reaching out to the least of His brothers and sisters.

**May this 'Christmas 2022' transform us  
to be more 'humane'  
in the 'New Year 2023'!**

*Bro. George K. J.*  
-Bro. George KJ