

Social significance of lohri essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Though Lohri festival has no religious significance but it holds a great social significance and is celebrated as a day of imparting social love to one and all. The festival of Lohri is meant to relieve people from worldly day to day routine, and make them relaxed, cheerful and happy. It is the time when people from all castes and social strata come together forgetting all past differences and grievances. Every year Lohri succeeds in bridging the social gap, as people visit homes, distribute sweets and greet each other.

Apart from this, the festival of Lohri is related to the harvest season. Harvest and fertility festivals a special significance for an agrarian country like India. Punjab being a predominantly agricultural state that prides itself on its food grain production, it is little wonder that Lohri is its one of the most significant festival. Thus, Lohri is symbolic of ripening of the crops and of copious harvest. Lohri instill sensitivity among the people towards their environment and culture. The fundamental theory behind the festival of Lohri is the sense of togetherness and the culturally rich legacy of the people of Punjab.

The focus of Lohri is on the bonfire. The traditional dinner with makki ki roti and sarson ka saag is quintessential. The prasad comprises of five main items: til (gingelly) , gajak (a hardened bar of peanuts in jaggery or sugar syrup) , gur (jaggery) , moongphali (peanuts) , and phuliya (popcorn). There is puja, involving parikrama around the fire and distribution of prasad. This symbolises a prayer to Agni, the spark of life, for abundant crops and prosperity.

Therefore, the festival of Lohri has great social significance. This time is considered auspicious for marriages and to undertake new ventures. The

farmer, comparatively free from his yeoman's duties, takes to fun and frolic. The golden color of the ripening corn in the fields pleases him. For newly-weds and newborns, Lohri is a special occasion. Families of the bride and groom get together and celebrate by dancing around the fire and expressing their joy. Lohri is a grand event of social and cultural integration, bringing about unity, amity, harmony among all castes and communities.

Origin of Lohri:

The origin of the Lohri can be traced back to the tale of Dulla Bhatti. By the end of the first week of January, small groups of boys ring the doorbell of houses and start chanting the Lohri songs related to Dulla Bhatti. In turn, the people give them popcorn, peanuts, crystal sugar, sesame seeds (til) or gur as well as money. Turning them back empty-handed is regarded inauspicious.

Lohri marks the end of winter on the last day of Paush, and beginning of Magha (around January 12 and 13), when the sun changes its course. It is associated with the worship of the sun and fire and is observed by all communities with different names, as Lohri is an exclusively Punjabi festival. The questions like When it began and why is lost in the mists of antiquity.

The origin of Lohri is related to the central character of most Lohri songs is Dulla Bhatti, a Muslim highway robber who lived in Punjab during the reign of Emperor Akbar. Besides robbing the rich, he rescued Hindu girls being forcibly taken to be sold in slave market of the Middle East. He arranged their marriages to Hindu boys with Hindu rituals and provided them with

dowries. Understandably, though a bandit, he became a hero of all Punjabis. So every other Lohri song has words to express gratitude to Dulla Bhatti.

Some believe that Lohri has derived its name from Loi, the wife of Sant Kabir, for in rural Punjab Lohri is pronounced as Lohi. Others believe that Lohri comes from the word 'loh', a thick iron sheet tawa used for baking chapattis for community feasts. Another legend says that Holika and Lohri were sisters. While the former perished in the Holi fire, the latter survived. Eating of til (sesame seeds) and rorhi (jaggery) is considered to be essential on this day. Perhaps the words til and rorhi merged to become tilorhi, which eventually got shortened to Lohri.

Ceremonies that go with the festival of Lohri usually comprises of making a small image of the Lohri goddess with gobar (cattle dung), decorating it, kindling a fire beneath it and chanting its praises. The final ceremony is to light a large bonfire at sunset, toss sesame seeds, gur, sugar-candy and rewaries in it, sit round it, sing, dance till the fire dies out. People take dying embers of the fire to their homes. In Punjabi village homes, fire is kept going round the clock by use of cow-dung cakes.

History of Lohri:

Lohri is essentially a festival dedicated to fire and the sun god. It is the time when the sun transits the zodiac sign Makar (Capricorn), and moves towards the north. In astrological terms, this is referred to as the sun becoming Uttarayan. The new configuration lessens the ferocity of winter, and brings warmth to earth. It is to ward off the bitter chill of the month of January that

people light bonfires, dance around it in a mood of bonhomie and celebrate Lohri.

Fire is associated with concepts of life and health. Fire, like water, is a symbol of transformation and regeneration. It is the representative of the sun, and is thus related, on the one hand with rays of light, and on the other with gold. It is capable of stimulating the growth of cornfields and the well being of man and animals. It is the imitative magic purporting to assure the supply of light and heat. It is also an image of energy and spiritual strength. That is why the Lohri fire gets sanctified and is venerated like a deity. On this occasion, people offer peanuts, popcorn and sweets made of til- chirva, gajak and revri – to propitiate fire as a symbol of the sun god.