Vasant Panchami, also spelled Basant Panchami, is a festival that marks the arrival of spring, celebrated by people in various ways depending on the region. The Vasant Panchami also marks the start of preparation for Holika and Holi, which occurs forty days later.

**Nomenclature and date**

Vasant Panchami has a specific meaning. Vasant means "spring" and Panchami means "the fifth day." Vasant Panchami falls on the fifth day of spring.

Vasant Panchami is celebrated every year on the fifth day of the bright half of the Hindu luni-solar calendar month of *Magha*, which typically falls in late January or February. It is treated as the start of spring, though it is generally winter-like in northern India, and more spring-like in central and western parts of India.

The festival is particularly observed by Hindus in India and Nepal, it's also been a historical tradition of Sikhs as well. In southern states, the same day is called Sri Panchami.

On the island of Bali and the Hindus of Indonesia, it is known as "Hari Raya Saraswati" (great day of Saraswati). It also marks the beginning of the 210-day long Balinese *Pawukon* calendar.

### Hinduism

**Goddess Saraswati**

Vasant Panchami is a festival that marks the arrival of spring. It is celebrated by people in various ways depending on the region. Vasant Panchami also marks the start of preparation for holiday and holih which occurs forty days later. For many Hindus, Vasant Panchami is the festival dedicated to goddess *Saraswati*, who is an ancient goddess of knowledge, language, music and all arts. She is the energy of *Brahma* and she symbolizes creative energy and power in all its form, including longing and love (*Kama*). The season and festival also reflects the agricultural fields which are ripening with yellow flowers of mustard crop, which Hindus associate with Saraswati’s favorite color. People dress in yellow sairs or shirts or accessories, share yellow colored snacks and sweets. Some add saffron to their rice then eat yellow cooked rice as a part of an elaborate feast.

Many families mark this day by sitting with babies and young children, encouraging their children to write their first words with their fingers, some just study or create music together. The day before Vasant Panchami, Saraswati’s temples are filled with food so that she can join the celebrants in the traditional feasting the following morning. In temples and educational institutions, statues of Saraswati are dressed in yellow and worshiped. Many educational institutions arrange special prayers or pujas in the morning to seek blessing of the goddess. Poetic and musical gatherings are held in some communities in reverence for Saraswati.

In Nepal, Bihar and eastern states of India such as West Bengal, Odisha and Assam, people visit her temples and worship her (Saraswati Puja). Most of the schools arrange special Saraswati Puja for their students in their premises. In Bangladesh, all major educational institutes and universities observe it with holih and a special puja.

In southern states such as Andhra Pradesh, the same day is called Sri Panchami where “Sir” refers to her as another aspect of the one goddess, Devi.

### Kamadeva and Rati

Another legend behind Vasant Panchami is based on the Hindu god of love called *Kama*. It is remembered as the day when Parvati approached Kama to wake up Shiva in *Yoga* meditation since the *Mah Shivaratri*. The other gods support Parvati, and seek Kama’s help to bring Shiva back from his meditation to do his duties in the world. Kama agrees and shoots arrows, made of flowers and bee, at Shiva from his heavenly bow of sugarcane in order to arouse him to pay attention to Parvati. This initiative is celebrated by Hindus as Vasant Panchami.

Vasant Panchami is associated with the emotions of love and emotional anticipation in Kutch (Gujarat), and celebrated by preparing bouquet and garlands of flowers set with mango leaves, as a gift. People dress in saffron, pink or yellow and visit each other. Songs about Krishna pranks with Radha, considered to mirror Kama-Rati, are sung.

This is symbolized with the Hindu deity Kamadeva with his wife Rati. Traditionally, in *Maharashtra*, Madiya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh, after bathing in the morning, people worship Shiva and Parvati, Offerings of mango flowers and the ears of wheat are traditionally made.

### Deo temple: Sun God

The shrine of the Sun-God in *Aurangabad* district, Bihar known as the Deo-Sun Shrine, was established on Basant Panchami. The day is celebrated to commemorate the founding of the shrine by King Aila of Allahabad and the birthday of the Sun-Deo God. The statues are washed and old red clothes on them are replaced with new set with mango leaves, as a gift. People dress in saffron, pink or yellow and visit each other. Songs about Krishna pranks with Radha, considered to mirror Kama-Rati, are sung.

In the Punjab region, Basant is celebrated as a seasonal festival by all faiths and is known as the Basant Festival of Kites. Children buy *Dor* (Thread) and *Guddi* or *Patang* (Kites) for the festival. This tradition of flying kites on various festivals is also found in western and northern Indian states of Gujarat, Maharshtra, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh. It is also found in part of Madiya Pradesh and some southern states. The people of the Punjab wear yellow clothes and eat yellow rice to emulate the yellow mustard (*sarson*) flower fields, or play by flying kites.

On Bali and among Indonesian Hindus, Hari Raya Saraswati (the festival’s local name) is celebrated with prayers in family compounds, educational institutions, and public venues from morning to noon. Teachers and students wear brightly coloured clothes instead of their usual uniforms, and children bring traditional cakes and fruit to school for offerings in a temple.
Controversy: Inter-religious disputes

Sikhism

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the founder of the Sikh Empire, encouraged the celebration of Basant Panchami as a social event in the Gurudwaras. In 1825 CE he gave 2,000 rupees to the Harmandir Sahib Gurdwara in Amritsar to distribute food. He held an annual Basant fair and sponsored kite flying as a regular feature of the fairs. Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his queen Morar would dress in yellow and fly kites on Basant Panchami. Maharaja Ranjit Singh would also hold a darbar or court in Lahore on Basant Panchami which lasted ten days when soldiers would dress in yellow and show their military prowess.

In the Malwa region, the festival of Basant Panchami is celebrated with wearing of yellow dress and kite flying. In Kapurthala and Hoshiarpur, a Basant Panchami fair is held. People attend the fair wearing yellow turbans and accessories. Sikhs remember the martyrdom of the child Hajiagat Rai on Basant Panchami, who was arrested by the Muslim ruler Khan Zakariya Khan after being falsely accused of insulting Islam. Rai was given the choice of converting to Islam or death and, having refused conversion, was executed on the Basant Panchami of 1741 in Lahore, Pakistan.

Pakistan

Kite flying in Lahore goes back centuries. After creation of Pakistan it evolved into a highly competitive sport which is not limited to "basant" only. There are regional teams, competitions and trophies. Kite And string making is an industry all over central Punjab providing livelihood to thousands. Given the shared history and culture in the Indian subcontinent, the Punjabi Muslims in and around Lahore also celebrate kite flying as a sport in Pakistan from home rooftops during the Basant season.

Sufi Muslim Basant

According to Lochan Singh Buxi, Basant Panchmi is a Hindu festival adopted by some Indian Muslim Sufis in the 12th century to mark the grave of the Muslim Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi and ever since, has been observed by the Chishti order. According to local Sufi traditions, the poet Amir Khusrau saw Hindu women carry yellow flowers to a temple on Basant and they were dressed in yellow, and he adopted this practice, one the Chishti order of Sufi Indian Muslims continue to practice.

Controversy: Inter-religious disputes

The Gujarati government has encouraged the observance of Saraswati Puja in schools on Vasant Panchami, a proposal that has been opposed by Indian Muslims because it is a religious festival of Hinduism. Vasant Panchami has been a historic occasion of dispute at the archaeological site of Bhojshala in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh with evidence of an early Saraswati temple (locally called Waghdevi). On the site of Bhojshala is a later era Kamal-Maula mosque, which Muslims use for Friday prayers. The Archeological Survey of India (ASI) has provided annual guidelines, when Vasant Panchami has been a historic occasion of dispute at the archaeological site of Bhojshala, which is a later era Kamal-Maula mosque, which Muslims use for Friday prayers. The Archeological Survey of India (ASI) has provided annual guidelines, when Vasant Panchami has been a historic occasion of dispute at the archaeological site of Bhojshala, which is a later era Kamal-Maula mosque, which Muslims use for Friday prayers. The Archeological Survey of India (ASI) has provided annual guidelines, when Vasant Panchami has been a historic occasion of dispute at the archaeological site of Bhojshala, which is a later era Kamal-Maula mosque, which Muslims use for Friday prayers.

See also

- Vasant (Ritu)

References


- "Kite Festival" by Sanjeev Narula.

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Vasant Panchami is celebrated in the fifth day of the month of Magha according to Hindu calendar and February according to the Gregorian calendar. What are the dates of Vasant Panchami in the next five years as per modern calendar? In 2014, the Vasant Panchami date is Tuesday, February 4. In 2015, the Vasant Panchami date is Saturday, January 24. In 2016, the Vasant Panchami date is Friday, February 12. In 2017, the Vasant Panchami date is Wednesday, February 1. Vasant Panchami, also spelled Basant Panchami, is a festival that marks the arrival of spring, celebrated by people in various ways depending on the region. The Vasant Panchami also marks the start of preparation for Holika and Holi, which occurs forty days later. Vasant Panchami has a specific meaning: Vasant means "spring" and Panchami means "the fifth day." Vasant Panchami falls on the fifth day of spring. Vasant Panchami (Devnagari: वांसत पंचमी), sometimes referred to as Basant Panchami or Basant Panchami (Devnagari: बांसत पंचमी), is a Hindu festival celebrating Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, music, and art. It is celebrated every year on the fifth day of the month of Magha. Also known as Saraswati Pujan (Sanskrit: सरस्वती पूजन), the festival is celebrated in honor of the goddess to invoke wisdom and consciousness in humans.