

WEATHER FORECASTING AT GRAM PANCHAYAT LEVEL

Weather forecasting plays a crucial role in agricultural planning, disaster management, and overall community preparedness, especially in rural areas where agriculture is a primary livelihood. In India, the Gram Panchayat (village council) serves as the grassroots level of governance, making it an ideal platform for localized weather forecasting. By integrating weather information at this level, communities can make informed decisions that enhance agricultural productivity and reduce vulnerability to climate-related disasters.

Agriculture is heavily dependent on weather conditions. Farmers need accurate forecasts to determine the best times for planting, irrigation, and harvesting. For instance, predictions about rainfall patterns can help farmers decide when to sow seeds or apply fertilizers, thus maximizing crop yield and minimizing losses.

Rural areas are often more vulnerable to climate-related disasters such as floods, droughts, and cyclones. Localized weather forecasting can provide timely alerts that enable communities to prepare for adverse weather conditions. This preparedness can significantly reduce loss of life and property.

Accurate weather data helps in the effective management of resources like water and fertilizers. For example, forecasting can guide farmers on when to irrigate their fields, ensuring optimal use of water resources.

Weather conditions also affect livestock health. Localized forecasting can alert farmers about extreme weather conditions that may impact their animals, allowing them to take preventive measures.

Involving local communities in the forecasting process is essential. Gram Panchayats can organize workshops to educate villagers about the importance of weather forecasting and how to interpret forecasts. Local knowledge about historical weather patterns should be integrated into the forecasting models to enhance accuracy.

The use of technology is pivotal for effective weather forecasting. Mobile applications and SMS services can disseminate weather information rapidly to farmers in rural areas. Additionally, installing weather stations at the Gram Panchayat level can provide real-time data on temperature, humidity, and rainfall.

Establishing partnerships with national meteorological agencies can enhance the accuracy of forecasts. These agencies can provide training for local personnel in data collection and analysis, enabling them to generate forecasts specific to their region.

While national and regional forecasts provide a general overview, localized models can take into account microclimates and specific geographical features of the area. Developing these models requires collaboration between scientists and local farmers to understand the nuances of the local climate.

Creating emergency response plans that incorporate weather forecasts can help communities prepare for natural disasters. Gram Panchayats can develop protocols for communication and action in case of extreme weather events, ensuring that residents are informed and ready to respond.

Many rural areas lack access to reliable data and technology. Establishing weather stations and ensuring their maintenance can be challenging due to financial and infrastructural limitations.

For effective implementation, local officials and community members need training in data interpretation and emergency response. This requires sustained efforts and resources.

There may be skepticism towards scientific forecasts, especially in communities that rely heavily on traditional knowledge. Bridging this gap requires effective communication strategies that respect and incorporate local wisdom.

Limited funding for weather forecasting initiatives can hinder progress. Securing financial support from government programs, NGOs, or international organizations is crucial for sustainability.

Several Gram Panchayats across India have successfully implemented localized weather forecasting initiatives:

In Maharashtra, the government launched a weather information system that provides real-time data to farmers. By using mobile technology, farmers receive SMS alerts about weather changes, helping them make timely decisions regarding their crops.

In Tamil Nadu, community-run weather stations have been set up, which are managed by local youth. These stations not only provide weather data but also engage the community in learning about climate patterns and agricultural practices.

In Uttarakhand, localized weather forecasts have been integrated into disaster management plans. The state government collaborates with local authorities to disseminate forecasts and prepare communities for potential disasters.

Localized weather forecasting at the Gram Panchayat level is vital for enhancing agricultural productivity, improving disaster preparedness, and managing natural resources in rural areas. By leveraging technology, fostering community engagement, and collaborating with meteorological agencies, these initiatives can significantly improve the resilience of rural communities against climate variability. Despite the challenges, the success stories from various regions illustrate that with the right approach and resources, Gram Panchayats can effectively harness weather forecasting to benefit their communities. As climate change continues to impact weather patterns globally, the need for localized forecasting becomes even more critical in ensuring sustainable development and community resilience.

■ RAVI ROHMETRA

Happy Dhanteras making the start of Dewali on 29th oct 2024 with rituals like cleaning homes, buying gold and performing puja for wealth and health purchasing gold, silver and other auspicious items lighting diyas and performing luxmi and yama puja. This major hindu d=festival also known as Dhanatrayodashi is celebrated two days before Dewali. Devotees worship Lord Kubera. The day is also celebrated at Dhanwantri Jyanti, honouring the god of medicine

Dhanteras is the first day of the five-day Diwali Festival as celebrated primarily in Northern & Western part of India. The festival, known as "Dhanatrayodashi" or "Dhanvantari Trayodashi",The word Dhanameans wealth and Trayodashi means 13th day as per Hindu calendar. It is celebrated on the thirteenth lunar day of Krishna paksha (dark fortnight) in the Hindu calendar month of Kartik.

On Dhanteras, Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped to provide prosperity and well being. Dhanteras holds special significance for the business community due to the customary purchases of precious metals on this day. Lord Kubera, the God of assets and wealth is also worshipped on this day.

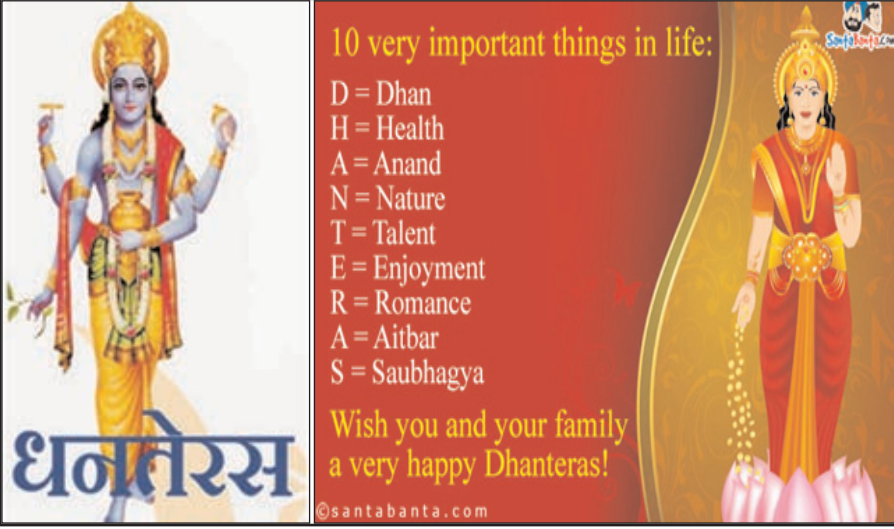
The festival of Dhanteras falls in the month of Kartik (Oct-Nov) on the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight. This auspicious day is celebrated two days before the festival of lights, Diwali.

How to Celebrate Dhanteras:

On Dhanteras, Lakshmi - the Goddess of wealth - is worshipped to provide prosperity and well being. It is also the day for celebrating wealth, as the word 'Dhan' literally means wealth and 'Tera' comes from the date 13th.

"In the evening, the lamp is lit and Dhan-Lakshmi is welcomed into the house. Alpana or Rangoli designs are drawn on pathways including the goddess' footprints to mark the arrival of Lakshmi. Aartis or devotional hymns are sung

DHANTERAS POOJAN



eulogizingGoddess Lakshmi and sweets and fruits are offered to her.

Hindus also worship Lord Kubera as the treasurer of wealth and bestower of riches, along with Goddess Lakshmi on Dhanteras. This custom of worshipping Lakshmi and Kubera together is in prospect of doubling the benefits of such prayers.

People flock to the jewelers and buy gold or silver jewelry or utensils to venerate the occasion of Dhanteras.

Many wear new clothes and wear jewelry as they light the first lamp of Diwali while some engage in a game of gambling.

Legends

An ancient legend ascribes the occasion to an interesting story about the 16-year-old son of King Hima. His horoscope predicted his death by snake-bite on the fourth day of his marriage. On that particular day, his newly-wed wife did not allow him to sleep. She laid out all her ornaments and lots of gold and silver coins in a heap at the entrance of the sleeping chamber and lit lamps all over the place. Then she narrated stories and sang songs to keep her husband from falling asleep. The next day, when

Yama, the god ofDeath, arrived at the prince's doorstep in the guise of a Serpent, his eyes were dazzled and blinded by the brilliance of the lamps and the jewellery. Yama could not enter the Prince's chamber, so he climbed on top of the heap of gold coins and sat there the entire night listening to the stories and songs. In the morning, he silently went away. Thus, the young prince was saved from the clutches of death by the cleverness of his new bride, and the day came to be celebrated as Dhanteras. The following day came to be called Naraka Chaturdashi ('Naraka' means hell and Chaturdashi means 14th). It is also known as 'Yamadeepdaan' as the ladies of the house light earthen lamps or 'deep' and these are kept burning throughout the night glorifying Yama, the God of Death. Since this is the night before Diwali, it is also called 'Chhoti Diwali' or Minor Diwali.[2]

According to another popular legend, when the Gods and demons churned the ocean for Amrita or nectar, Dhanvantari (the physician of the Gods and an incarnation of Vishnu) emerged carrying a jar of

Evolving Gender Roles: Shifting Views and Family Dynamics

■ DR. KANIKA GUPTA

Gender roles, the social and behavioral norms deemed appropriate for individuals of a specific sex, have been a fundamental aspect of societal structure throughout human history. Traditionally, these roles have been rigid and distinctly defined, with men often seen as breadwinners and protectors, while women were typically relegated to caretakers and homemakers. This binary perspective has long influenced family dynamics, employment patterns, and social expectations.

In contemporary society, however, there has been a significant shift in the perception and enactment of gender roles. The evolving landscape is characterized by a growing recognition of gender fluidity and a challenge to conventional stereotypes. This transformation is driven by a myriad of factors, including increased awareness and advocacy for gender equality, legal reforms, educational advancements, and changes in the economic landscape.

The shift in gender roles has profound implications for family dynamics. Traditional family structures are giving way to more diverse and inclusive models, where roles are more flexible and shared. This evolution reflects broader social changes and has significant implications for how families operate and interact in today's world. By examining both traditional and contemporary views on gender roles, we can gain a deeper understanding of the ongoing transformations in family dynamics and the societal forces driving these changes.Gender roles, once rigidly defined by societal norms, are undergoing profound changes in contemporary society. The traditional notion of gender roles assigned men as breadwinners and women as homemakers, but today's families are redefining these roles in ways that reflect greater equality and diversity. As attitudes toward gender evolve, families are experiencing both challenges and opportunities in adapting to these shifts.

Changing Views on Gender Roles

Breaking Stereotypes: Modern society increasingly recognizes that gender roles are not inherently tied to biological sex. Men and women are seen as capable of pursuing diverse roles and interests beyond traditional expectations.

Economic Realities: With more women entering the workforce and contributing significantly to household income, the idea of a sole male breadwinner is becoming outdated. Dual-income households are now the norm in many parts of the world.

Parental Responsibilities: There's a growing acknowledgment of the importance of involved fatherhood and shared parenting responsibilities. Men are increasingly taking on caregiving roles, while women pursue careers and leadership positions.

LGBTQ+ Inclusivity: The LGBTQ+ rights movement has challenged traditional gender norms, leading to greater acceptance of diverse gender identities and expressions. This has further contributed to the breaking down of rigid gender roles.

Kerala's government is leading the charge for gender equality with new textbooks showing kitchens where everyone pitches in. The illustrations feature kitchen scenes where husbands and other family members are involved in cooking and kitchen work alongside women, challenging outdated stereotypes. This initiative underscores Kerala's dedication to gender-neutral education, teaching children that household chores are a shared responsibility.

Implications for Families

Balancing Work and Family: As both partners often work outside the home, families face challenges in balancing career aspirations with childcare and household responsibilities. Flexible work arrangements and supportive policies are essential for facilitating this balance.

Role Modeling for Children: Children growing up in families where gender roles are more fluid are exposed to a broader range of possibilities for their own futures. They learn that gender does not determine one's abilities or opportunities.

Challenges to Traditional Institutions: The changing dynamics of gender roles can challenge traditional family structures and institutions. This may lead to resistance or backlash from individuals or communities accustomed to more traditional arrangements.

Increased Diversity: Families today come in diverse forms, including single-parent households, same-sex parent households, and cohabiting couples. This diversity

reflects a more inclusive understanding of family beyond traditional gender roles.

Navigating the Transition

Open Communication: Families benefit from open and honest communication about expectations, desires, and challenges related to gender roles. This fosters understanding and cooperation between partners.

Flexibility and Adaptability: Flexibility in roles and responsibilities allows families to adjust to changing circumstances and individual preferences. Recognizing that there's no one-size-fits-all approach to gender roles is key.

Supportive Policies: Governments and employers play a crucial role in supporting families by implementing policies such as parental leave, affordable childcare, and workplace flexibility. These measures help alleviate the burden of caregiving responsibilities.

Community Support:Building a supportive community of friends, relatives, and peers can provide invaluable assistance to families navigating changes in gender roles. Sharing experiences and resources fosters resilience and mutual support.

A live experience of a couples residing in Jammu city

Traditional View:Consider,a couple Mr. Rajesh Gupta and Mrs. Sunita Gupta both in their early 70's live in a Jammu city of UT J&K. Their marriage arranged by their families, is emblematic of traditional Indian values where distinct gender roles are clearly defined and adhered to.

Family Dynamics:Sunita is the homemaker. Her day starts before dawn, involving household chores, cooking, and taking care of their children and elders. Rajesh, on the other hand, is the breadwinner, working long hours as a shop owner. His responsibilities end at the threshold of their home, a clear demarcation that reflects traditional gender roles.

Decision-Making: In Sunita and Rajesh's household, major decisions are made by Rajesh. Sunita's role is largely advisory, reflecting a patriarchal setup where the man is the head of the family.

Societal Expectations: Their relationship is deeply influenced by societal expectations. Sunita's identity is closely tied to her role as a wife and mother, while Rajesh's is associ-

the elixir on the day of Dhanteras.[2]

Preparation

On the day of Dhanteras, business premises are renovated and decorated. Entrances are made colorful with traditional motifs of Rangoli designs to welcome the Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity. To indicate her long-awaited arrival, small footprints are drawn with rice flour and vermilion powder all over the houses. Lamps are kept burning all through the night.

Traditions

On Dhanteras Hindus consider it auspicious to purchase gold or silver articles or at least one or two new utensils. It is believed that new "Dhan" or some form of precious metal is a sign of good luck. "Lakshmi Puja" is performed in the evenings when tiny Diyas of clay are lit to drive away the shadows of evil spirits. "Bhajans", devotional songs in praise of Goddess Lakshmi, are also sung.

Celebrations

Dhanteras is celebrated with gusto and enthusiasm. "Lakshmi Puja" is performed in the evenings when tiny diyas of clay are lit to drive away the shadows of evil spirits. Bhajans, devotional songs in praise of Goddess Laxmi, are sung and "Naivedya" of traditional sweets is offered to the Goddess. There is a peculiar custom in Maharashtra to lightly pound dry coriander seeds (Dhane in Marathi for Dhanatrayodashi) with jaggery and offer as Naivedya.

In villages, cattle are adorned and worshipped by farmers as they form the main source of their income.

The Myth of Dhanavantri:

Another legend says, in the cosmic battle between the gods and the demons when both churned the ocean for 'amrit' or divine nectar, Dhanavantri - the physician of the gods and an incarnation of Vishnu - emerged carrying a pot of the elixir. So, according to this mythological tale, the word Dhanteras comes from the name Dhanavantri, the divine doctor.

(The writer is Social Worker).

ated with his professional success and ability to provide for the family.

Contemporary View:Now consider, a modern couple Priya and Anil, both in their early 30's. Their marriage, based on mutual love and respect, represents the shifting paradigm of gender roles in modern India.

Family Dynamics: Priya is a banker, and Anil is a software engineer. They share household responsibilities equally, challenging the traditional notion that domestic work is solely a woman's domain. Both prioritize their careers and personal growth, balancing work and home life together.

Decision-Making: Priya and Anil's, made decisions collaboratively. They discuss and decide on matters ranging from finances to family planning, reflecting a partnership where both voices are valued equally.

Societal Expectations: This couple faces societal pressures differently. While they receive support from their immediate social circle, they occasionally confront conservative attitudes from extended family and society at large. However, their commitment to an egalitarian relationship serves as a model for younger generations.

Bridging the Gap

The comparison of these two couples highlights the ongoing evolution of gender roles in India. While traditional views still hold sway in many parts of the country, urbanization, education, and exposure to global ideas are fostering more egalitarian relationships.

This shift from traditional to contemporary views of gender roles illustrates a broader societal change towards gender equality. By embracing more flexible and equitable roles, couples demonstrate how evolving gender dynamics can lead to healthier and more supportive family environments.As society evolves, so too do our perceptions of gender roles within families. Embracing diversity, fostering equality, and promoting flexibility are essential for creating inclusive family environments where individuals can thrive regardless of gender. By challenging outdated stereotypes and embracing change, families can navigate the transition toward more equitable and fulfilling relationships and roles.

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■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

There is nothing impossible in the scheming of the God almighty and if the supreme force of the universe likes ,there is then no impossibility of the exiled Kashmiri Pandits going back to their native place of birth .But in the scheming of the men especially in the face of negative attitude of the Kashmiri Muslims ,it seems near impossible that KP's will go back to Kashmir and settle their as they were living before the insurgency and armed struggle of 1990's.However for the return of the Kashmiri Pandits ,they themselves can make sincere efforts in this direction .But the initiative should come from the Modi government .The BJP's poll manifesto for the current and ongoing assembly polls mentions that if the BJP wins the majority and forms the government ,it will take steps for the return and rehabilitation of the KP's .But the fact remains that the BJP has been at the seat of power in the country for more than 10 long years ,it did nothing for the return and rehabilitation of the KP's to valley nor did it try to ease the difficulties of the exiled KP's at Jammu and elsewhere .Even the NDA government did not enhance the cash does to the refugee Pandits despite the demands and protests by the community in trouble and distress .Then poll manifestoes and promises are nothing more than bundle of lies and therefore people do hardly trust the promises given in election manifestoes .But if the GOI and the UT government yet to be formed make sincere efforts in the direction of the return and rehabilitation of displaced KP's much can be achieved in this behalf .However the million dollar question is will the two governments

make sincere efforts for the return and rehabilitation of exiled KP to valley .It seems that the BJP and other parties are harping on the issue of the return of KP's only for their political benefit of vote bank otherwise they will not take earnest steps in this regard .The hard fact and bitter truth is that the majority of Kashmiri Muslims do not want return of KP's to Kashmir .A large number of KM's have thrived on the distress sales of the properties of Exiled Pandits and many have looted their left out properties in Kashmir .It is better to call a spade a spade even if some people are annoyed and displeased by plain speaking .A very small number of KM's who are moderates have no objection about the return and rehabilitation of internally displaced community in their native place .However much depends on the determination of the central government and if they really want return and rehabilitation of exiled Pandits back to Kashmir .But as the experience teaches us that the political executive of this country called Bharat even in the constitution only talks about the return of KP oustees back to Kashmir only for political consumption and for remaining in the limelight but in their heart of hearts ,they care too hoots for the return of KP's to valley .As the security situation is emerging in the troubled UT ,the KP's cannot live at the scattered places like they were living before their exile and banishment .Majority of the houses and landed properties have been consumed as distress sales all these years of their displacement and thus where will they go as they have no houses at their original places of habitat .So government if it is really interested in the return and rehabilitation of KP oustees should buy land

at three /four places across valley and construct flats for housing the KP's on their return .So it is obvious that KP's can live at their concentrated locations where there should be all minimum facilities for their living with ease as well as security provision .In any case they cannot live in Kashmir as before in scattered locations in rural areas .So the government should make proper arrangements for their housing and also make fool proof security arrangements so that they can live without any fear and insecurity .It is pertinent to remember that no Davshalpi Vishwakarma will construct house for the exiled KP community in Valley overnight and thus the construction of proper accommodation for the KP community will take enough time .The exiled KP are scattered far and wide in various countries of the globe but it is the innate will of every KP to return to their roots in Kashmir where they can protect their traditions ,customs ,religious and cultural identity and in fact preserve their distinct culture while remaining in the broad spectrum of Sanatan Dharma .No doubt some of the internally displaced Hindus have under compulsion constructed houses for them but it remains their urge to return to their roots sooner or later. These houses constructed under compulsion are houses only and cannot qualify to be called homes as the home lies were heart lies .The centre government and the new UT government should work in unison to ensure the return and rehabilitation of the displaced Pandits back to Kashmir .It will be the litmus test for their talk and promise of ensuring return of KP's to valley .Kashmir basically and primarily belongs to Kashmiri Pandits and it is they who are the aborigines of Kashmir

which in fact is the Kyashp land and this fact KM's also know but brush under the carpet under the opium of radicalism . Therefore KP's has the first claim on the land and resources of Kashmir and they should be given their land so that they can live in the serene ,pleasant and conducive climate of Kashmir .No power on earth can deny them this right and sooner or later the KP's will have to return to their roots in Kashmir but they can live there in concentrations and not like before .It is the moral ,cultural ,human and social responsibility of the Kashmiri Muslims to call KP's back to valley and it is they who should take initiative in this direction if they really want KP's back in valley otherwise all talk of return and rehabilitation does not make any sense and is humbug .The KP organizations which have emerged in the exile of this community should make a consensus on the most important subject of return and rehabilitation of theirs as it is related with the lives of all KP's and make them ready for the return to Kashmir . The politicians talk of Kashmir being incomplete without KP's seems only hypocrisy and for the real meaning of this often repeated phrase the political parties should make sincere efforts in the direction of the return and rehabilitation of KP's and then and only then they are justified in repeating time and again that Kashmir is incomplete without Kashmiri Pandits and thus if they mean what they repeat infinitum ,they should make sincere efforts in the direction of return of Kashmir Pandits to Kashmir:

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