

EMPOWERING YOUTH

‘New GST rates in the agriculture sector a blessing for farmers’

‘The revised GST rates will help increase farmers’ incomes’

The launch of Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat) marks a significant turning point in India's youth empowerment journey. Introduced on October 31, 2023, by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, MY Bharat is more than just a platform-it is a national movement aimed at nurturing young citizens into active participants in India's development story. At a time when over 65% of India's population is under the age of 35, the initiative holds transformative potential.

MY Bharat is conceived as a technology-driven, digital-first platform to connect, engage, and mobilize India's youth. It acts as a bridge between young citizens and developmental opportunities, promoting values of leadership, volunteerism, civic responsibility, and social engagement. Whether through participating in campaigns like Viksit Bharat Padyatra or engaging in local cleanliness drives, MY Bharat empowers youth to make meaningful contributions to society while developing essential life and leadership skills.

The recent announcement of the Sardar@150 Unity March, commemorating the 150th birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, is a prime example of how MY Bharat seeks to blend historical remembrance with forward-looking civic action. Through initiatives like district-level padyatras, essay competitions, Swadeshi fairs, and awareness drives, the youth are not only remembering national icons but also imbining the values of unity, self-reliance, and national pride.

What sets MY Bharat apart is its inclusive and participatory approach. It brings together diverse stakeholders-students, volunteers, professionals, NSS and NYKS members, and even veterans-on a common platform. This collaborative spirit aligns perfectly with the vision of "Jan Bhagidari", or people's participation, envisioned by the Hon'ble Prime Minister. It is a welcome shift from token youth involvement to meaningful engagement in policy implementation and societal transformation.

MY Bharat is a visionary step towards empowering India's Amrit Peedhi-the generation that will define India's progress towards becoming a developed nation by 2047. It embodies the spirit of nation-building through youth leadership.

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN

Welfare of farmers remains the top priority of the central government, as relentless efforts are being made to make farming easier, reduce production costs, and increase farmers' profits. Transforming the lives of farmers and making agriculture a pillar of national prosperity is not just Prime Minister ShriNarendraModi's goal - it is his unwavering resolve. Every decision, every reform under his leadership, places the farmer at the heart of India's growth story. The recent revisions in GST rates are a shining reflection of this vision. The 'Next Generation Reform in GST', announced by the Prime Minister from the Red Fort on Independence Day, is now taking shape as the foundation of a new, self-reliant and prosperous India.

Keeping the interests of farmers and the common people foremost, the government has made sweeping reductions in GST rates - reforms that will energise India's agricultural system and power the progress of farmers. These are not abstract changes in policy; they touch the very soil farmers till every day. Over 10 crore small and marginal farmers will benefit directly. Earlier, agricultural equipment attracted GST rates as high as 18%; now it has been slashed to just 5%, ensuring direct savings of thousands of rupees for every farmer.

Take the case of a farmer buying a 35-horsepower (HP) tractor: What once cost around ₹6.5 lakh will now be available for approximately ₹6.09 lakh - a saving of ₹41,000. For a 45 HP tractor, the saving is ₹45,000; for a 50 HP tractor, ₹53,000; and

for a 75 HP tractor, ₹63,000. Even smaller machines are now within easier reach - a power tiller will cost around ₹12,000 less, a paddy transplanter ₹15,000 less, and a thresher ₹14,000 less. Equipment like power weeders and seed drills are cheaper by ₹5,000-₹10,000. Larger machinery for harvesting and sowing - such as a 14-feet cutter bar, a square baler, or a straw reaper - will now save farmers ₹1.87 lakh, ₹94,000, and ₹22,000, respectively. Tools like mulchers, super seeders, happy seeders, and sprayers are also more affordable, bringing modernisation to every acre.

Mechanisation is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity for profitable farming. The tax cuts on sprinklers, drip irrigation systems, harvesters, hydraulic pumps, and spare parts will empower even small and marginal farmers to adopt modern tools. Labor costs will fall, time will be saved, and productivity will rise. While prices may vary slightly across states and companies, the overall result remains clear: farmers will spend less and earn more.

Every step we take is guided by the singular aim of farmer prosperity. I have personally met representatives of agricultural machinery manufacturers to ensure that these tax reductions translate into immediate benefits for farmers. But this reform extends beyond agriculture; it is a powerful push for the entire economy. Lower input costs will enable farmers to generate higher returns from their produce, in turn strengthening small and cottage industries. Cheaper raw materials will bring down production costs, boosting MSMEs and creating new employment opportunities.

Agriculture and animal husbandry are twin engines of the rural economy. The GST exemptions granted to beekeeping, dairy, animal husbandry, and cooperative societies will inject new energy into the countryside. When farmers' expenses go down and their incomes rise, they will naturally invest more in education, healthcare, and better living standards. That is how rural India's holistic development begins - not through handouts, but empowerment.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always emphasised organic and natural farming as the future of Indian agriculture. At a time when the world is moving toward sustainable cultivation and ecological balance, the government's decision to reduce GST on bio-pesticides and micronutrients from 12% to 5% is both timely and visionary. It will encourage farmers to transition away from chemical fertilisers toward organic inputs. The results will be transformative - richer soil fertility, a healthier planet, and reduced costs of cultivation. Given that most Indian farms are small holdings, the government continues to promote integrated farming and allied activities to ensure sustained income growth.

Value addition is equally crucial. The GST reforms have provided a strong boost to the food processing industry. With more investment in cold storage and processing units, farmers will be able to preserve their produce longer and sell it at better prices. Prime Minister ShriNarendraModi has repeatedly assured that no policy or agreement will ever compromise the interests of farmers, fishermen, or livestock owners. These reforms stand as living proof of that commitment. They will also reduce India's dependence on

imports and give momentum to 'Make in India' and 'AtmanirbharBharat'.

At the heart of rural prosperity are the women of self-help groups. GST reforms have reduced their operating costs, helping small-scale rural industries flourish. As new processing units, storage facilities, and transport networks emerge in villages, fresh avenues for entrepreneurship and employment will open up. Lower taxes will mean higher sales, new jobs, and a generation of youth empowered to become self-reliant in their own villages.

I am confident these reforms will realise our collective resolve of 'Swadeshi se Samridhhi' (prosperity through self-reliance), turning India's economy into a truly "long-living economy". These changes are not just about lowering tax rates; they represent a moral and economic commitment to reinvigorate the lives of farmers, small traders, animal rearers, fishermen, and women driving the rural enterprise. Guided by the spirit of 'SabkaSaath, SabkaVikas' and 'Antyodaya', our government continues to prove that the prosperity of farms and farmers is the true measure of the nation's progress.

This Diwali, India will celebrate the festival with the theme of 'Swadeshi se Samridhhi' - lighting lamps of self-reliance in every home, echoing the chants of 'Jai Swadeshi', and moving confidently towards the vision of a 'ViksitBharat' under the leadership of Prime Minister ShriNarendraModi.

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Karwa Chauth: A Timeless Celebration of Love, Devotion, and Partnership

MAHADEEP SINGH JAMWAL

In contemporary times, Karwa Chauth is no longer just a traditional ritual-it has evolved into a celebration of love, commitment, and partnership in marriage. While it continues to honor devotion and patience, modern couples increasingly view it as a mutual expression of care, with husbands often participating or appreciating the significance of the fast. The festival has also become a vibrant cultural and social event, blending tradition with fashion, media, and social gatherings. Beyond ritualistic observance, it sparks conversations about equality, shared responsibility, and the evolving meaning of marital bonds in a modern, progressive context.

Karwa Chauth is one of Hinduism's most treasured rituals, celebrated during Krishna-Paksha. It signifies absti-

nence, perseverance, and spiritual dedication. Wives honor their partners with heartfelt prayers for safety and prosperity, inspired by Parvati's legendary fast for Shiva. This observance transcends mere fasting, fostering patience, resilience, and profound emotional intimacy while inviting divine blessings for vitality, longevity, and abundance. Ultimately, the custom strengthens conjugal bonds through devotion, reverence, and enduring spiritual connection. Over centuries, this observance has evolved into a tradition that intertwines spiritual aspiration with everyday life, celebrating the harmony of love, faith, and dharmic duty.

The roots of Karwa Chauth are reflected in Vedic thought. While the Rigveda does not explicitly mention the fast, it emphasizes marital harmony

and the welfare of spouses, laying the foundation for rituals that safeguard both family and spiritual well-being. The Manusmriti, one of the earliest dharma shastras, reinforces this principle, highlighting that disciplined rituals strengthen family bonds, preserve fidelity, and cultivate spiritual merit.

The Puranas provide a more explicit endorsement of such observances. The Skanda-Purana and Padma-Purana encourage fasting and rituals for the husband's prosperity and longevity, while the Narada and Vamana-Puranas specifically reference Karwa Chauth as a sacred day where devoted observance aligns human action with cosmic order, protects the household from misfortune, and invites divine blessings. Even epic literature echoes this ethos: in the Mahabharata, Draupadi, faced with adversity while Arjuna undertook

penance, sought guidance from Lord Krishna, who reminded her of Parvati's fast for Shiva. Inspired, Draupadi observed Karva Chauth with unwavering devotion, an act believed to have contributed to the Pandavas' eventual victory, exemplifying the transformative power of ritualized love and faith. Regional texts such as the Str?-dharma-paddhati, Nir?-aya Sindhu, and Dharma Sindhu further elaborate the spiritual dimension of women's devotion, portraying fasting and ritual observance as acts that harmonize the worldly and the divine, offering both spiritual merit and household prosperity.

Karwa Chauth, a timeless ode to love and devotion, has journeyed from intimate spiritual vigil to grand cultural spectacle. Since the 1990s, Bollywood has woven it into tales of romance,

adorned with elegance, grandeur, and heartfelt emotion. Iconic films like Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge and Hum Aapke Hain Koun depict the fast-breaking ritual as a pivotal emotional moment, symbolizing love, longing, and devotion. Television serials and social media platforms-Instagram, Facebook, TikTok-present it with glamour, fashion, and trending aesthetics. Digital advertisements and e-commerce promotions have even transformed it into a consumer festival. Simultaneously, news channels and online portals highlight its religious and cultural significance, ensuring its awareness across society. In this way, Karwa Chauth has become a confluence where traditional devotion, modern trends, and media influence intersect, reflecting culture in motion: rituals adapting to contemporary sensibi-

lities while preserving their essence of reverence and dedication.

In essence, Karva Chauth is far more than a day of fasting; it is a celebration of marital fidelity, spiritual discipline, and the timeless interplay of devotion and divine grace. Rooted in Vedic wisdom, Pur?-nic guidance, epic illustration, and regional dharmic traditions, it continues to inspire generations, reminding us that true devotion is both an offering and a blessing-a luminous thread weaving together love, faith, and cosmic harmony.

As women watch the moon with unwavering devotion, men are called to reflect: love is shown in daily respect, patience, and presence, not fleeting gestures. If the moon appears once a year, let our care, loyalty, and support shine every day-steadfast, enduring, and transformative.

Karwa Chauth-the biggest ritual of Married Hindu women

RAVI ROHMETRA

Karwa Chauth is a ritual of fasting observed by married Hindu women seeking the long life , well being and prosperity of their husbands. The festival of Karwa Chauth provides an opportunity for all married women to get close to their in laws Married women keep a strict fast and do not take even a drop of water. It is the most important and difficult fast observed by married Hindu women . Karwa Chauth day falls on the 4th day of the Kartik month every year. It begins before sunrise and ends only after offering prayers and worshipping the moon at night. No food or water can be taken after sunrise . the fast is broken once the moon is sighted and rituals of the day have been performed. At night when the moon appears ,women break their fast after offering water to the moon. Possessing a tremendous social and cultural significance, this festival is celebrated mostly by North Indians by keeping fast, applying Heena, wearing fashionable clothes and exchanging gifts.

Legend of Karwa Chauth

A long time ago there lived a beautiful girl by the name of veeravati she was the only sister of her seven loving brothers , who was married to a king . on the occasion of the first Karwa Chauth after her marriage she went to her parents house. After sunrise she observed a strict fast however the queen could not stand the rigors of fasting and was desperately waiting for the moon



to rise. The seven brothers who loved her dearly , were very disturbed watching the distress of their sister and decided to end her fast by deceiving her. Then the brothers reflected a mirror through Peepal trees leaves. The sister taken it as moonrise , broke the fast and took food.

However the moment the queen ate her dinner she received the news that her husband , the king was seriously ill. The queen rushed to her husband's palace and on the way. She met Lord Shiva and his consort , Goddess Parvati. Parvati informed her that the King had died because the queen had

broken her fast by watching false moon. However when the queen asked her for forgiveness, the Goddess granted her the boon that the king would be revived. But to achieve this she would have to undertake the Karwa Chauth fast under strict rituals , then only her husband would come to life. Thus , by strictly following all the rituals of Karwa Chauth, queen Veeravati relieved her husband.

Tradition of fast

On this day the women get up before sunrise . They worship Shiva , Parvati, Ganesha , Kartikeya and the moon. The blessings of the Gods are invoked for longevity and prosperity of their husbands and children. Mothers-in-law give their daughters in law sumptuous fool called " Sargi" to eat before sunrise, as the fast starts before sunrise and ends only after worshipping the moon at night . It is a tough fast , as the women do not take any food or water. In the evening the women cherish the joy of adoring bridal finery. Many times , the newly-wed wear their wedding dress in this auspicious occasion ,usually the Ghagra choli or Banarasi Sari, embellished with the old new shimmer of gold , diamonds and rubies . After dressing up she receives gifts from the mother-in-law. Before evening, the married women receives the basked full of goodies from her mother, which is meant for the mother in law. The basket contains sweets , mathi, fruits and a sari . Before the sun sets , most of the women in a locality gathers in

one house and prepare a corner for the puja . This puja chowk is beautifully decorated and a small platform is prepared against the wall. On this the image of Gauri Mata or Goddess Parvati is placed the women sit around this image with their bayas.Each women also places a Karwa or a pitcher full of water and seven pieces of Pua in front of her. It is adorned with Kharia , aipum and a little roli. A red thread is tied around the karwa, at the beginning of the puja women apply the roli teeka to Goddess Gauri and also to themselves with the thumb and the third finger of the right hand , water is sprinkled on the image of the Godess.The same procedure is repeated with aipum and roli. An elderly women of the family narates the legend of Karwa Chauth.Even a widow can narrate this story. The women then pray for the long life and welfare of their husbands. While chanting the prayers they pass their bayas from one to another. The wait for the moonrise begins after sunset and as soon as the moon is sighted , prayers are offered to the moon., the fasting women first observe the moon through the sieve and then break their fast. The first sip of water and the first morsle of food are offered by the husband . A sumptuous dinner follows.

Karwa Chauth song sung by women while exchanging thalis. Karwa Chauth festival is widely celebrated by North Indian women and the puja song sung by Punjabi women while they exchange their Thalís seven times.

The Hindu Festival of Karwa Chauth

BAIRAJ CHAWALGAMI

The sacred soil of India has, since antiquity, been a crucible of festivals, fairs and festivities that embody its civilizational grandeur. The crown of the nation-Jammu and Kashmir-is no exception to this resplendent cultural legacy. Among the myriad festivals that embellish the Indian calendar, Karwa Chauth stands apart as an exquisite testament to conjugal devotion, predominantly observed by married Hindu women across northern and western India. This unique ritual, marked by austerity, abstinence and unwavering faith, is celebrated for the longevity, prosperity and security of their husbands. Significantly, even unmarried maidens, aspiring for an ideal life partner, participate in the observance with equal zeal. The festival is consecrated to Lord Ganesha-the remover of obstacles-and Mata Karwa, whose legend sanctifies the occasion.

Women undertake the rigorous nirjala vrat (absolute fast without food and water), which concludes only upon the moonrise when the husband offers the first sip of water to his wife. Throughout this arduous day, the prayers and invocations of the women are suffused with aspirations for a harmonious, prosperous, and enduring marital life. Karwa Chauth epitomises the quintessential Indian notion of pativrata dharma-the creed of fidelity - wherein the husband is venerated as divine, and the wife's devotion transcends worldly temptations.

The preparations for this revered occasion commence days in advance, as anticipation mounts in households awaiting the festival. The ritualistic origins are steeped in lore, the most prevalent being the saga of Karwa, a devoted wife residing near the Tungabhadra river. When her husband was ensnared by a crocodile, Karwa bound the beast with a sacred thread and sought Lord

Yama's intervention. Though reluctant at first, Yama was compelled by her unflinching resolve and formidable chastity to release her husband from death's clutches. This act of conjugal fortitude, occurring on the fourth day of Kartik Krishna Paksha, has since been immortalised through the annual observance of Karwa Chauth. Several other narratives-the tale of Queen Veervati, Draupadi, and the legendary devotion of Savitri towards Satyavan-have become part of its mythological tapestry. Yet, the story of Karwa remains the most enduring and widely embraced, emblematic of steadfast loyalty and divine intercession.

Karwa Chauth is not merely a ritual of renunciation; it is a profound affirmation of the marital bond. The fasting, performed with absolute abstinence, is symbolic of the indomitable strength of womanhood and its capacity to sustain relationships on the bedrock of sacrifice

and love. For husbands, it is a poignant reminder of their wives' unalloyed fidelity, thereby deepening the mutual bond of companionship. Historically, the festival also possessed strong social undertones. In an era when young brides were married off early and transplanted into unfamiliar households, Karwa Chauth became a celebration of sisterhood. A symbolic ritual would mark the bride's lifelong bond with a god-sister, who became her confidante and moral anchor in times of distress. Thus, beyond its spiritual and conjugal dimensions, Karwa Chauth also evolved as a day of feminine solidarity, a sanctuary of empathy and companionship. The etymology itself is illustrative - Karwa referring to the earthen vessel, symbolising sustenance and continuity, and Chauth denoting the fourth day of the lunar fortnight of Kartika. Falling just before Diwali, it is deeply enmeshed with the agrarian rhythm of harvest,

festivity and social bonding. Over centuries, the festival has metamorphosed into an emblem of marital love and togetherness, celebrated with grandeur, devotion and cultural vibrancy. Karwa Chauth is thus a sublime confluence of mythology, ritual, social tradition and emotional profundity. It affirms the sanctity of marriage, celebrates the resilience of women, and perpetuates the cultural ethos of Hindu society. In its observance lies a living testimony to India's spiritual richness and the endurance of its traditions in the face of modernity.

In essence, Karwa Chauth transcends the realm of ritual to embody a profound cultural, spiritual, and emotional legacy of India. It is not merely a fast, nor solely a prayer for longevity, but rather a luminous affirmation of faith, devotion, and the sanctity of conjugal bonds. In its observance, one witnesses the resilience of women who, through unwa-

vering austerity, exalt their relationships and elevate their roles from partners to pillars of familial harmony. The endurance of this festival across centuries, despite social transitions and the march of modernity, demonstrates the deep roots of tradition in the Indian psyche. At the same time, Karwa Chauth reflects the evolving essence of womanhood-from the age-old image of the pativrata to the modern embodiment of love, loyalty, and partnership built on mutual respect. It is a day that celebrates not only the bond between husband and wife but also the spirit of sisterhood and solidarity among women. Above all, Karwa Chauth stands as an enduring reminder of India's timeless heritage, where rituals are not hollow practices but living expressions of faith, sacrifice, and human connection. Its celebration underscores the richness of our cultural fabric and the eternal strength of sacred relationships.

