

PROMOTING SWADESHI PRODUCTS

In an era defined by globalization and consumerism, the call to promote Swadeshi products-goods made locally using indigenous resources-has once again gained momentum. More than just an economic movement, the Swadeshi ethos reflects self-reliance, national pride, sustainable development, and empowerment of local communities. As India treads on the path of becoming a global economic powerhouse, embracing Swadeshi is both a practical strategy and a moral imperative.

Historically, the Swadeshi movement played a crucial role during India's freedom struggle. It was a direct response to colonial exploitation and a strong assertion of India's capability to produce for its own needs. Today, the context may be different, but the objective remains similar-economic independence and empowerment through self-sustainability. Promoting Swadeshi products is vital for several reasons. First, it strengthens local industries and generates employment, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. Whether it is handloom weavers, artisans, farmers, or small-scale entrepreneurs, supporting their products uplifts millions who form the backbone of the Indian economy. Second, Swadeshi products often carry a lower carbon footprint as they do not require long-distance transportation or heavy packaging, thus promoting environmental sustainability. From traditional crafts to organic food, herbal cosmetics to eco-friendly apparel, India has a rich repository of indigenous products that align with eco-conscious lifestyles. Moreover, the quality and uniqueness of Swadeshi goods are often superior and rooted in centuries-old traditions and craftsmanship. By choosing these, consumers not only buy a product but also preserve cultural heritage and support skilled livelihoods. The government's 'Vocal for Local' initiative, along with schemes like Startup India, Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, and One District One Product (ODOP), reflect the state's commitment to empowering Indian enterprises. However, policy alone cannot create transformation. Public participation and consumer awareness are crucial. Each purchase decision made in favour of a Swadeshi product contributes directly to nation-building. Educational institutions, media, and influencers have a role to play in creating awareness and changing mindsets. Campaigns, exhibitions, Swadeshi fairs, and digital platforms dedicated to local products can make a tangible impact. Promoting Swadeshi is not about rejecting foreign goods blindly, but about making informed, responsible choices that benefit the Indian economy and environment. As citizens, let us rediscover the pride in "Made in India" and inspire a new generation to appreciate the value of local innovation and craftsmanship.

It is time to look inward for strength, outward for inspiration, and forward with confidence - powered by Swadeshi.

Bhai Dooj in changing times: How to maintain love and affection

■ DR. PRIYANKA SAURABH

As the quiet post-Diwali light slowly descends into homes, the morning of Bhai Dooj arrives-filled with sweetness and affection. Sisters apply a tilak to their brothers' foreheads, perform aarti, and silently pray for their brothers' happiness. In return, the brother gives his sister a gift and promises to be with her throughout her life. This scene, while seemingly simple, is also profound. It's not just a tilak, it's a ritual that draws a line of trust, security, and love in relationships.

But today, as times change and the definitions of relationships shift, the question arises: does the same sense of belonging and affection of Bhai Dooj still exist? Is the brother-sister relationship still as natural, fearless, and full of emotion as it once was, in the mud and sunlight of the village courtyard?

Bhai Dooj was once not just a festival, but a celebration of life. Sisters would prepare and wait for their brothers early in the morning, the aroma of culinary delights wafting through their homes. Brothers would travel from far and wide to their sisters' homes, as it was a day of reunion. There was no pretense, no formality-just a genuine outpouring of emotions. Back then, relationships were not distanced, but warmth in hearts.

Bhai Dooj is still celebrated today, but its spirit has faded. Now, the Bhai Dooj tilak is often applied with an emoji sent on WhatsApp, and both Rakhi and tilak have become mere online greetings. Messages like "Bhai Dooj Mubarak" flash across social media, but behind them, the gaze no longer reflects the affinity that once shone in a sister's eyes when she saw her brother's face.

This change isn't just about technology, it's also about empathy. Time has certainly connected us, but the bonds that have been forged now reside more in devices than in hearts. Festivals like Bhai Dooj, once symbols of closeness, affection, and communica-

tion, are now becoming mere status updates. This shift is rooted in the hustle and bustle of modern life, commercialism, and self-centered thinking, which have distanced us from our loved ones.

The festival of Bhai Dooj is not just a celebration of sisterhood, but also a symbol of the emotional balance in which the brother provides security and the sister provides compassion. Both serve as a necessity for each other, forming the foundation of social relationships. However, in today's generation, this relationship is gradually becoming formal. Increasing urban busyness, migration, and self-reliant lifestyles have reduced the brother-sister relationship to a mere "chance meeting."

Whereas once, a brother would visit his sister's home and spend the entire day with her family, these visits are now limited to a few minutes or video calls. Sisters are also now financially independent, emotionally strong, and make their own life decisions. This change is also positive, as sisters are no longer "in need of protection," but rather embody the self-respect of equality. But even in this era of equality, it's important to maintain the warmth of relationships.

This is the very purpose of festivals-to rekindle relationships and bridge distance. Bhai Dooj reminds us every year that relationships are nurtured not just by blood, but by behavior. But the pace of modernity has made us so busy that we've begun to confine even our emotions to a timetable. Sometimes it feels as if relationships have become mere guests on a few festive days on the calendar.

Today's sisters don't just want gifts, they want an emotional partnership. They don't just want their brothers to give them money or gifts on festivals; they want them to understand them, respect them, and stand by them in their decisions. And brothers also want their sisters to be not just embodiments of affection, but partners in support and compassion. This is the new form of relationship-

a balance of equality and intimacy.

Bhai Dooj should no longer just symbolize the safety of sisters, but also mutual respect and communication. This festival reminds us that the relationship between a brother and sister isn't just for childhood; it's a lifelong bond. While life's paths may be different, the paths of hearts must remain connected.

Today's society has come to measure relationships based on "productivity" and "professionalism." We seek benefits even in friendships, and even family relationships can sometimes feel like a burden. Bhai Dooj, in such times, reminds us that there's no substitute for love. Technology can build relationships, but intimacy comes only from touch, a smile, and a sense of belonging.

It's true that times are changing, and so should the style of relationships. But the seeds of emotion must remain in every change. The festival of Bhai Dooj must be given a new meaning-one where both brother and sister respect each other's feelings, struggles, and independence. Festivals survive only when they preserve their spirit over time.

Today's sisters seek equality from their brothers, not just protection; and brothers are also beginning to understand that a sister's independence is her strength, not rebellion. This understanding can deepen this relationship. Bhai Dooj can now symbolize a social structure where the relationship between men and women is one of cooperation and compassion, not protection and dependence.

Sometimes it seems that festivals have their own language, reminding us of things we forget in everyday life. The language of Bhai Dooj is that of memory and affection. This festival takes us back to a time when we cared for someone without reason, when relationships were not transactions but the foundation of life. This festival should inspire us to introspect-are we still as intimate as we were in childhood?

If the answer to this question is 'yes,' then the festival is alive. And if the answer is 'no,' then we must revive it-not through social media posts, but through genuine action. By visiting a sister's home to inquire about her well-being, by hugging a brother, by reliving a childhood memory.

The true meaning of Bhai Dooj is that the walls of relationships should remain untouched by the dust of time. This festival teaches us that a loving relationship never grows old; we just need to know how to polish and polish it.

Today, as the world moves toward "digital relationships," festivals like these connect us to the earth. They remind us that human emotions are still our greatest asset. Therefore, the Bhai Dooj tilak should be applied not just to the forehead, but to the heart-where the lines of affinity, remembrance, and gratitude remain permanent.

The message of Bhai Dooj is simple-relationships don't require elaborate rituals, just small gestures of sympathy. Sometimes a phone call, sometimes a letter, sometimes a random thank you-these are the small tilaks that keep the brother-sister bond alive. Times will change, festivals will change their forms, but if love and belonging remain in our hearts, relationships will never break. Bhai Dooj reminds us that no matter how fast-paced life becomes, stopping for a day, to apply a tilak to a loved one, seeing the spark of affection in their eyes-that is the true festival.

So this time, when you apply the tilak, also take this pledge-that you will never let the bonds of relationships slacken. May the light of Bhai Dooj burn not just in lamps but also in hearts. May love and affection flow not just in pictures but in behavior. Only then will the essence of this festival be preserved, and we will be able to say-

Even in changing times, the love and affection associated with Bhai Dooj remains intact.

Dynamic quartet of women redefines leadership at YS&S Deptt

■ KIRTI DHAR

In alignment with the Centre Government's unwavering commitment to promoting sports, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir continues to spare no effort in elevating the standards of sports across the Union Territory.

The transformation unfolding within the sports landscape of J&K is nothing short of remarkable. From developing world-class infrastructure and implementing progressive sports policies to ensuring transparent selection processes and appointing capable, merit-based officers and officials, the administration has set a new benchmark in competence and integrity.

Under the dynamic leadership, particularly with four exemplary women steering the Youth Services and Sports Department, sports governance in Jammu and Kashmir is experiencing a vibrant renaissance-one rooted in vision,

inclusivity, and excellence.

Led by an exceptional administrator, Yasha Mudgal, Commissioner Secretary Youth Services and Sports, J&K, the team is strengthened by a charismatic quartet-- Anuradha Gupta serves as Director General of Youth Services and Sports; Jyoti Devi Salathia holds the position of Special Secretary, YS & Sports; and Vinakshi Koul is the Joint Director of YS&S, Jammu. Together, they work with cohesion and energy to deliver outstanding results.

The recent postings of the Commissioner Secretary and the Director General in the Department of Youth Services and Sports, according to reliable sources, have infused a renewed sense of purpose and direction within the organization.

These strategic postings are being widely viewed as pivotal steps toward strengthening institutional frameworks, streamlining administrative processes,

and fostering a culture of efficiency and accountability.

With visionary leadership at the helm, the department is now better positioned to implement comprehensive programs aimed at promoting youth empowerment, encouraging sports excellence, and ensuring holistic development across all levels.

Sources within the Central Secretariat of the Department have revealed that the long-standing issue of determining seniority among departmental employees, including Physical Education Lecturers, Zonal Physical Education Officers, Physical Education Masters, and Teachers, is finally nearing resolution. This long-pending demand, which has been a matter of concern for years, has gained unprecedented momentum under the visionary leadership of the dynamic duo-the Commissioner Secretary and the Director General of the Youth Services and Sports

Department.

In a significant stride toward administrative reform, the department has also successfully completed the formulation of its own set of service rules, a process that had been under consideration for over a decade. With the groundwork now complete, the implementation of these long-anticipated rules is expected to be initiated shortly, marking a new chapter of transparency, efficiency, and fairness in departmental governance.

Under the energetic duo, the 69th National School Games-2025 have set a remarkable benchmark in the realm of youth sports. With nearly 4,000 athletes participating, the event is being hosted in an exemplary manner across the twin divisions of the Union Territory, showcasing efficiency, enthusiasm, and exceptional organization. Moreover, a significant transformation is evident in the execution and preparation of youth development initiatives such as the

Viksit Bharat Challenge, Youth Parliament, and National Youth Festival. These programmes reflect a renewed commitment to nurturing young talent, fostering leadership, and promoting holistic national development.

These women sports administrators stand as a remarkable embodiment of vision in action-delivering every initiative with cohesion, clarity, and an unmistakable sense of purpose and charisma. In essence, the Department of Youth Services and Sports (YS&S) and the J&K Sports Council have become exemplary symbols of women's empowerment, with both organizations being led by dedicated women officers who work tirelessly to ensure their continued growth and success.

These two dynamic administrators exemplify leadership with purpose. Through their relentless dedication and far-reaching vision, they continue to

nurture a thriving sporting ecosystem across Jammu and Kashmir-one that empowers talent, encourages participation, and inspires excellence. Their efforts are shaping an environment where remarkable athletes, especially women sportspersons like Sheetal Devi, Bilquis Mir, Shreya Gupta, and Muskan Rana continue to rise, bringing immense pride to the region and securing its place on the global sports map.

Moreover, among the government's many progressive initiatives, the implementation of the J&K Sports Policy 2022 stands out as a landmark achievement-an enduring testament to the vision and commitment of Nuzhat Gul, Secretary of the J&K Sports Council. Equally noteworthy is the ongoing formulation of new operational rules for the Department of Youth Services and Sports, being steered with clarity and foresight by Anuradha Gupta, Director General, YS&S.

Govardhan Puja should increase devotion, not show-off

■ DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH

The rows of lamps have barely been extinguished when the next morning, Govardhan Puja, arrives. This festival is not merely a worship of Lord Krishna, but a celebration of gratitude to nature, cattle, and collective labor. This festival symbolizes the simplicity, the fragrance of the soil, and the purity of the mind that are deeply rooted in Indian culture. But when the meaning of devotion is limited to mere appearances, photos, and status, then saying, "May Govardhan Puja increase devotion" is both a wish and a warning.

The underlying theme of Govardhan Puja in the story of Krishna is profound. When the people of Gokul, fed up with Indra's arrogance, were drowned in heavy rain, the young Krishna lifted Govardhan mountain on his little finger. To view this event merely as a miracle is to minimize its significance. In reality, it is a social symbol. It tells us that when power becomes blinded by arrogance, the common people must overcome the crisis through their collective courage. Krishna started the tradition of Govardhan Puja so that people would accept nature, the cow, and their labor force as divinities-because they are the true helpers, not just the gods of the sky.

Govardhan Puja is essentially a worship of nature. Cows, cow dung, grazing land-these are all part of the ecosystem that has made Indian life self-sufficient. When we create Govardhan from cow dung, soil, and flowers, it symbolizes our reverence for the earth and the environment. It is a reminder that this soil is our true mother, germinating every seed and providing us with food. But in today's times, all these symbols are slowly being lost. Plastic decorations have replaced cow dung, and perfume has taken over the smell of soil. Govardhan Puja has now become an Instagram post-with "Happy Govardhan Puja" stickers, but no fodder for the cows. Devotion now shines on the screen, not on the earth.

Krishna said, "Karmanye Vadhikaraste." But we have abandoned action and embraced rituals. Worship is



now moving away from the spirit of collectivity, cooperation, and compassion. In the past, everyone in villages would build Govardhan together: children would bring cow dung, women would decorate with flowers, and men would light lamps. It was a festival of collective labor and simplicity, with no competition or comparison. Today, each household performs a different puja-as if it has become the Govardhan of ego. Devotion has become a mere display, losing the true meaning of worship.

India's greatest paradox is that we shed tears calling the cow "mother," yet the same cows die of hunger and pain on the streets. The cow is the center of Govardhan Puja, and we have forgotten that very center. What kind of devotion is this that lights a lamp but is stingy about offering a handful of fodder? Worship means more than just aarti, it also involves responsibility. Until we show compassion towards cattle, water, soil, and trees, our worship will remain incomplete.

Festivals are no longer celebrations of devotion, but of indulgence. Even Govardhan Puja has become part of "selfie season." There's a rush to upload

photos of the prasad, thali, and puja on social media. But the true bhog-found in service, contentment, and simplicity-has been lost. In our grandmothers' times, this festival was filled with the fragrance of soil and hard work. Now, it has become a spectacle of artificial light and showmanship. Devotion now depends on the flash of a camera, not on the light of the soul.

If Krishna were alive today, he might ask, "Are you truly creating Govardhan, or are you erasing its original meaning? Does your worship have the scent of the earth or merely the aroma of a mall? Does your aarti include the sound of a cow bell or a mobile notification? These questions test our innermost faith. Because devotion is only meaningful when it shares the joys and sorrows of others."

Even today, this festival is celebrated with intimacy in rural India. Children gather cow dung barefoot in the village streets, and women sing the traditional song-"Govardhan Dharyo Girdhari." There, the worship is simple, yet heartfelt. In urban India, Govardhan Puja has become a "reel"-a five-minute prayer, followed by a pizza party. This

difference reveals that development has given us convenience but robbed us of compassion. Our modernity has disconnected us from our own roots.

At a time when climate change and environmental crisis have become the greatest threats facing humanity, the significance of Govardhan Puja is even greater. This festival teaches us that before praying to God, we must fulfill our duties towards the earth. This is the time when we must reinterpret Govardhan Puja in a new sense-not just as a religion, but as a way of life. If we plant trees on this day, serve in a cowshed, clean a pond, and feed animals-that will be true devotion.

Shraddha doesn't just mean bowing down, it means connecting-with the earth, with water, with animals, with humans. Only when Shraddha is combined with responsibility does it become devotion. Otherwise, it remains merely a ritual. Krishna's Govardhan festival teaches us this-that true religion is standing up for others.

Krishna shattered Indra's ego, but today, hundreds of such Indras thrive within us-greed, jealousy, consumption, ostentation, and the blind desire for

power. To pacify these Indras, we must raise a Govardhan within ourselves. That Govardhan is not a mountain of stone, but a mountain of wisdom, restraint, and compassion, which we must all hold together.

There's another profound aspect to Govardhan Puja-it's a celebration of togetherness. When all of Gokul gathered beneath Govardhan, no one inquired about anyone's caste, status, or wealth. Everyone was under one roof-equal, safe, and connected. This scene demonstrates that society must remain united in times of crisis. But today, we're confined within our homes, worship has become private, and connections with society have become merely formal. We must restore that same sense of togetherness, where being together is worship.

This festival also teaches us that power doesn't just mean physical strength. When the child Krishna lifted the mountain, it was not physical strength, but moral strength. In today's age, that moral strength has become the biggest shortcoming. We must create a small Govardhan in every home, in every heart-where faith, simplicity, and compassion coexist.

To truly observe Govardhan Puja, three resolutions must be made. First, gratitude to nature-planting a tree or feeding an animal after each puja. Second, a revival of simplicity-replacing ostentation with genuine sentiments. And third, a restoration of collectivity-returning the tradition of celebrating the puja together, so that dialogue and compassion remain alive in society.

Today is a time when the definition of faith is changing. It's now visible in advertisements and propaganda, but is disappearing from our lives. We bow in temples, but don't stop for an injured cow or a hungry person. We light lamps, but fear the darkness within our own minds. This disconnection is leaving us hollow from within. Govardhan Puja is an opportunity to fill that hollowness-if we so choose.

This festival is not merely a religious act, but a moral covenant-between humanity and nature. It reminds us that service to the earth comes before

worship of the gods. Mount Govardhan is no longer a physical rock, but rather the inner strength within us, which stands firm in times of crisis. Indra is no longer a heavenly deity, but a symbol of our desires, eager to pour down like rain on every pleasure. And Krishna is the wisdom that teaches him restraint.

When we say, "Govardhan Puja increases faith," we mean not just an increase in worship, but a deepening of faith. Faith is the power that awakens us to our duty. If faith increases, compassion will increase in society; if faith deepens, morality will return to politics; if faith is true, the environment will be saved.

Our society today needs a Govardhan that is built with stones of responsibility, not show. A festival that teaches us truth, not decoration. A devotion that resides within society, not on social media. This is the essence of Govardhan Puja-where nature, animals, and humans are bound together.

Krishna's message is simple: "When adversity strikes, lift mountains, but together." This line is as relevant today as it was then. If we resolve within ourselves on the day of Govardhan Puja to put responsibility above ostentation, this very puja will be the most sacred.

Govardhan Puja reminds us that the truest fragrance of life resides in the soil, and it is from this soil that our devotion sprouts. The soil sanctified by the hooves of cows, watered by the labor of farmers, and made golden by the sunshine of the heavens. No worship is complete until we honor this soil. So this time, when you light the lamps, make a promise-that Govardhan Puja will brighten not only your home but your heart as well. Faith will be reflected not only in the flame of the aarti but also in the light of your actions. Only then will we be able to truly say-

"Govardhan Puja should increase devotion, not show-off."

Because if faith increases, God will automatically descend within us, and perhaps then we will not need any Govardhan - because every mind will itself become a mountain.

