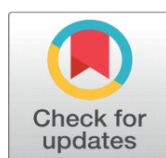


# PERCEPTION OF RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS ACROSS GENERATIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE YOUTH VALUE

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Religious festivals are an integral part of Indian culture. However, the meaning, concept, and essence of the celebration of these festivals are different for different people. The present research attempts to assess how the perception of religious festivals changes across generations and its impact on the value system of youths.

**Method:** The research was conducted on a sample of 20 (male 9 and female 11) individuals from the age range of 20 to 70. The sample was further divided into 4 age groups: 59 to 70 years (n=5), 43 to 58 years (n=5), 27 to 42 years (n=5), and 20 to 26 years (n=5). In the present study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and thematically analysed.

**Result & Conclusion:** Finding revealed significant variation in the perception of the essence of religious festivals across generations. Spirituality, community welfare, and interpersonal connections are essential for older generation groups. However, the younger generation's perception is much more individualized. Thus, indicating towards changes in value system regarding to aging.

**Keywords:** Religious Festivals, Value System, Indian Society, Youth

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Religious festivals are an integral part of Indian society. These festivals reflect the vibrant tradition of the Indian Subcontinent. Festivals not only have religious significance but also indicates towards it's emotional, social, and cultural significance. However, the meaning, concept, and essence of these festivals are different for different people.

Religious festivals are closely associated with our value systems (Leung et.al.2002). In India religious concepts are closely associated with life, religious beliefs thus become a guiding force and shape our value system. Value means anything important to an individual. These values are the guiding forces in an individual's life. Schwartz (2006) recognized the following ten types of values that are related to our society:

- **Achievement:** It involves personal success.
- **Benevolence:** It involves focusing on the benefits of the community.
- **Conformity:** It involves following social norms.

- Power: It involves concern for social status, dominating others, and so on.
- Security: It involves concern for maintaining unity in society and creating safe, stable relationships.
- Self-direction: It reflects self-guided beliefs and behaviors.
- Stimulation: It includes innovation and challenges in our life.
- Tradition: It means following and appreciating customs.
- Universalism: It reflects accepting and promoting the well-being of people and nature.
- Hedonism: It reflects value for happiness and enjoyment

There is a close connection between religious beliefs and value systems. The way we celebrate festivals reflects our beliefs, feelings, and the essence of life. Several research have shown that belief in religiosity is positively associated with benevolence and conformity, whereas negatively associated with the value of achievement and power (Bernado et.al 2016; Bond et.al. 2004). Festivals build connections between people and thus lead to exchange and develop values among them (Chang, 2020). Research also indicates that participation in religious festivals reduce stress and vulnerability to substance abuse among youth (Wills et al. 2003). Traditional festivals provide opportunities to the youth to develop personality and value systems (Yefremova et al., 2022).

In India, throughout the year people celebrate different religious festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Holi, Durga puja, Diwali, Pongal, Eid, Christmas, and many more. However, in the last few years, the meaning, and essence of the religious festivals has changed. with celebrations becoming much more commercialized. Earlier festivals were associated with joy and prosperity, however, currently they seem to be more with feeling of grandiosity. Similarly, in older times people participated in the festivals to share joy, values with each other and to socialize. But on the other hand, in newer times festivities are celebrated with self-engrossment, and to promote oneself over social media.

Furthermore, religious festivals earlier were celebrated to fulfil need for spirituality, and belongingness. But with changing times people celebrate festivals to show their supremacy, status, and power. For example, the same can be seen in “Pandal Pujas” such as Durga Puja. With theme based puja concept (Kundu, 2023; Rai, 2022) and competition between different puja organizers. Organizers are spending a lot more money and sense of increased feeling or grandiosity and competition. (Ghosh & Dutta, 2022). Similar changes can be seen in other major Indian festivals such as Diwali, Ganesh Chaturthi, etc.

These changes are not only limited to urban India, but the changes are also very prominent in tribal communities as well. For instance, the traditional way of celebrating festivals has changed a lot among the Nocte tribe in Arunachal Pradesh. Firstly, in older times where they used to celebrate a lot of festivals. But nowadays due to the scarcity of time, most of the festival celebrations have declined. Secondly, there is also a change in the way they celebrate their festivals. For instance, the drink ‘Kham’ is replaced by cold drinks, fruit juice, and foreign liquor. They also do not follow traditional rituals and ceremonies (Tesia, 2023). Similarly, the effect of modernization can be seen in the Diwali celebration of the Bhil community, a tribal community in Rajasthan, thus resulting in changes with tradition Diwali celebrations (Bagchi & Baranda, 2018).

Besides, The impact of globalization on Indian festivals and many western festivals (such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Valentine’s Day) have also been introduced in the subcontinent (Bose, 2014). With rise in the celebration of western festivals the basic idea is to promote oneself on social media (Sundaram, 2019)

Considering the above discussion, the question arises whether these changes in perception and celebration of religious festivals reflect changes in the value system. Therefore, the objective of the present study is to focus on how the perception of religious festivals has changed across generations and its impact on the value system of youths.

## 2. METHOD

Participants: Twenty individuals (Female 11 and Male 9) were selected as participants. Sample was selected through purposive sampling techniques. The participants were further divided into the four generations-Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and **Generation Y** following the sociologist Karl Mannheim (1958) classification.

Baby Boomers: 59 to 70 years (n=5)

Generation X: 43 to 58 years (n=5)

Generation Y : 27 to 42 years (n=5)

Generation Y :20 to 26 years (n=5)

**Inclusion Criteria:**

1. Participants should hail from urban living
2. Should belong from Hinduism

**Exclusion criteria:**

1. Education qualification below 12<sup>th</sup> standard
2. Any clinically significant psychiatric or physical illness limiting there ability to express themselves

Tool: Semi Structure interview was conducted. 20 open ended questions were formulated and included in the study after expert review.

**Procedure:**

- 1) In the present study, the semi-structured interview was used. Questions were prepared for interviewing. At first, 25 questions were developed based on the literature review. After that, questions were rated by 5 experts. Based on the expert rating at total of 20 questions were selected for the interview.
- 2) Face to face interview was carried out for twenty individuals from the following age groups:
  - 59 to 70 years
  - 43 to 58 years
  - 27 to 42 years
  - 20 to 26 years
- 3) Interviews were hand transcribed.
- 4) Thematic Analysis was done following Braun and Clark model (2006). The steps of analysis are mentioned below:
  - First, data was transcribed manually to become acquainted with the data. The transcribed data was read several times to identify appropriate information.
  - In next steps, codes were generated based on the observations.
  - After that themes were identified.
  - Themes were reviewed and evaluated.
  - Themes were labelled.
  - Report was prepared based on the themes.

### 3. RESULT

**Table 1: Themes of Age group 59 to 70yrs**

| Themes                             | Subthemes                                                                                                 | Quotes                                                                     |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Spiritual and Religious Importance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection with God</li> <li>• Performance of rituals</li> </ul> | 'Help me to connect with my inner self and with god'                       |
| Community Welfare                  | Opportunity for livelihood<br>Opportunity for work                                                        | Many people can earn and support their family during the festival seasons' |
| Interpersonal relation             | Family reunion<br>Family bonding                                                                          | 'During festivals, all family members can gather and celebrate together    |

|                                |                                          |                                                                              |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Positive Emotions              | Peace<br>Provide strength                | 'Festivals bring happiness and joy                                           |
| Shifting towards individualism | More focus on the individual celebration | 'Young generation prefers to celebrate alone rather than with family members |

**Table 2: Themes of Age group 43 to 58yrs**

| Theme                                       | Subtheme                                                | quotes                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social Relation and acceptance of Diversity | Cultural Exchange<br>Bonding in society                 | 'Festivals provide us the opportunity to know other cultures                                                  |
| Positive Emotion                            | Love<br>Care                                            | 'During the festival family members can spend quality time                                                    |
| Interpersonal Relation                      | Family get-together.<br>The happiness of family members | "All family members gather and celebrate festivals'                                                           |
| Shifting towards individualism              | Lack of bonding                                         | 'Previously festivals were very informal but now festivals are very formal, and people are unable to connect" |

**Table 3 Themes of the age group 27 to 42yrs**

| Theme                                       | Subtheme                                      | Quotes                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interpersonal Relation                      | Interaction and Bonding with others           | 'Meeting family and staying together                                                                                                               |
| Cultural Importance                         | Connection with the root of the culture       | 'Festivals are a means of being connected to our roots and our culture for me'                                                                     |
| Positive emotion and religious significance | Enjoyment<br>Connection with God              | 'It is more to be with feeling a connection with the god'.                                                                                         |
| Shifting towards individualism              | Individual celebration<br>Lack of involvement | 'Earlier they brought people not just of a family but the entire neighborhood together and it was more fun and a chance of enjoying contentedness' |

**Table 4 Themes of the age group 20 to 26yrs**

| Theme                              | Subtheme                                         | Quotes                                                              |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Positive Emotion                   | Enjoyment<br>Break from monotonous life          | "Festivals are fun, we get a break from routines'                   |
| Self-centered                      | Preference for 'me time                          | 'Festivals allow me to dress up, to do something special for myself |
| Preference for virtual reality     | Social Media identity<br>Social Media Popularity | 'I can dress up and upload my pictures on install                   |
| Experience and Accepting Diversity | Exposure to a new culture<br>New experiences     | "Western festivals help us to know about different cultures"        |

## 4. DISCUSSION

Religious festivals reflect the nature of a society. The way people celebrate them reflects their values, beliefs, and meaning of life. Therefore, change in the perception of religious festivals also reflect changes in the value system of society. The findings of the present study also reflect a similar view. In the present study, a semi-structured interview was carried out with 4 different age groups to determine their perception of religious festivals as well as the changes in their value system.

In the older generation (aged between 59 to 70yrs), religious festivals were spiritual connected as they believe festivals to be a way of connecting with God. Furthermore, the age group perceives it to result in community welfare as people get opportunities for livelihood and work. Thus, festivals serving a societal purpose. The older generation also relates festivals with positive emotions and peace. They also suggested a shift in the current times toward individualism with reference to festivals, as individuals prefer individual celebrations than celebrating festivals with family members.

Individuals within the age group of 43 to 58yrs perceive religious festivals to help develop interpersonal relations as brings family together during celebrations and share joy. They also believe, religious festivals promote social relations and increase acceptance of diversity. Festivals being a time when people from different strata mix; interact with each other; share values, customs, and beliefs with each other. All these increase acceptance and tolerance of diversity. Individuals within this age bracket also associate festivals with positive emotions such as love and care.

*"During festivals, I can spend quality time with my husband, children, & other family members. We decorate the house together; we prepare sweets and snacks together. We participate in different rituals together. Relatives visit our house, and we also visit their house. We also exchange gifts".*

Thus, individuals in this age group (43-58 years) perceive religious festivals to reflect positive emotions. However, they also believe that in present days festivals are moving towards individualization. They are becoming more and more commercialized and formal. Thus, lacking bonding among individuals. The religious festivals are also becoming nuclear, limited only to certain boundaries.

*"Earlier the entire neighbourhood used to celebrate festivals together and festivals were informal. But nowadays it is only limited to a small group and maybe some extended family members participate together. But not the entire neighbourhood like earlier. Festivals are also becoming very formal nowadays. People meet and greet each other during festivals, but only to maintain social etiquette not from their core of heart like earlier".*

The value system that can be observed in this age group is conformity and togetherness. Another value that is observed in this age group is universalism means they believe that one must be concerned about the well-being of society.

The individuals within the age group of 27 to 42yrs believe that religious festivals have cultural importance as the festivals help us to connect with the root of the culture. As per them, all rituals and customs of festivals have cultural significance, and the root is in our ancient cultural beliefs. So, during festivals, when people are celebrating all those rituals, they are appreciating and show respect for their own culture and customs

*"Kumari Puja (Worshipping pre-pubescent girl) during Durga Puja has its root in our ancient culture. Kumari Puja reflects respect toward women and women's power. So, when we perform Kumari Puja, we are appreciating our age-old beliefs and traditions".*

They also believe that religious festivals help us to interact with others and develop bonds. In this way, religious festivals have social significance. Besides, they also believe that these festivals bring happiness and enjoyment to all.

*"Festivals simply give us happiness. During this time, we forget all other pain, and problems, and gather to enjoy and share happiness".*

People in this age group also believe that religious festivals are a means to connect with God. During festivals, people perform different rituals, such as Anjali, chanting mantras, Kumari puja, Singing devotional songs, and so on. All these connect them with God and thus bring mental peace and happiness.

The above discussion reveals that all three age groups (59 to 70yrs, 43 to 58yrs, and 27 to 42yrs) have some common values. These common values are conformity, traditionalism, hedonism, and universalism value. They all believe that festivals are a way by which all members of society interact with each other, develop bonding, exchange cultural values as well as festivals bring happiness and prosperity. Further, they also show concern as they perceive that religious festivals are becoming more and more commercialized and individually oriented.

In comparison to three older age groups, the perception of religious festivals is different in younger group (20yrs to 26yrs). Although they also perceive that festivals are associated with positive emotions such as happiness and enjoyment. But their concept of enjoyment is different from older generations. Their celebration is much more centered around themselves.

*"During Durga Puja, I get some 'me' time as I do not have an office the next day, so I can relax and watch movies on Netflix. So, this is my way of celebrating festivals".*

Young generations also feel that religious festivals create an opportunity to promote themselves on social media. These beliefs reflect the 'power value' and eccentricism of the young generation.

Therefore, it is observed that there is a sharp change in the value system. These findings are consistent with the previous research which reflect the change in youth's value system (Bhakta and Dutta, 2017; Shobha & Kala, 2015)

In the case of the older generation interpersonal relationship, social bonding, and spiritual connection are important, whereas for the younger generation, the value is centered around individual needs, status, and happiness.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The present study reflects there is a sharp change in the perception of religious festivals as well as a shift in the value system. A trend toward individualism can be observed in the young Indian society.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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