

Karva Chauth

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The 4th phase of the moon in the dark fortnight, i.e. after the Full Moon in the month of Karthika, is observed as the day of Karva Chauth. Karva Chauth is the day when married women fast from sunrise to sunset for the protection and longevity of their husbands.

The festival is observed in the states of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat and wherever people from these states have gone on to reside.

Etymology

Karva means a 'pot' and Chauth means fourth' in Samskrt – an obvious reference to the 'fourth day after Full Moon'. There is a legend associated with why this day got the name Karva Chauth.



Women praying for their husbands

The legend

A woman called Karva was deeply in love with her husband. One day while bathing in a river, a crocodile caught hold of her husband. She prayed to Yama, the divinity of death, to release her husband from imminent death. Yama respecting her love and steadfastness, her Vrta, bestowed him back to her. Such stories are replete in every culture, in every land, through the times. Commemorating these stories, women observe Karva Chauth, with steadfastness through fasting Vrta, for the health, Ayush, life of their loved ones, starting from their husband. But why in the month of Karthika?

A period of harvest and military campaign

A Jawan, soldier and a Kisan, farmer form the backbone of any civilization. Karva Chauth falls around the period when the wheat is sown. Wheat is stored in pots, Karva. Karva Chauth is the day when women pray for a good harvest for their husbands, the Kisans, farmers, so that the Karvas are always full. In ancient days, the period around Karva Chauth was also the time when soldiers ventured out on military campaigns. The women used to conduct prayers on Karva Chauth then, for the protection of their husbands during a battle.

War Window

The Ramayana battle was fought post south west monsoon. In ancient times, there was a clear war window. During monsoon it is not possible to go to battle. Soon after the monsoons was the apt time to go to battle. The Rama – Ravana War was fought after the south west monsoon



Mahabharata War was fought post monsoons. In ancient times, The famous Mahabharata war at Kurukshetra was also fought after the monsoons, before winter.



India's East Pakistan war of 1971, for liberation of Bangladesh, was also fought after the monsoons.

The Bangladesh Liberation War which also took place after the monsoons

Like this, through the ages, post monsoon was considered an apt Window to go to war.

Why only women observed Karva Chauth?

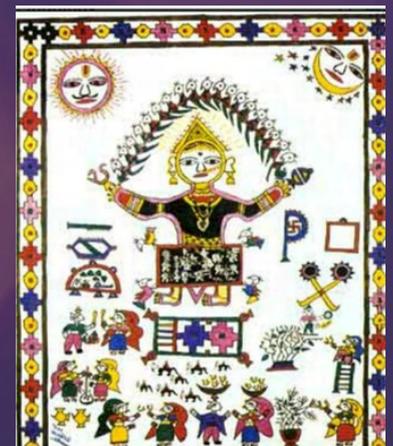
From those days, to the present days, it is mainly men who have been going to war and women have stayed back to look after the families, their farms, their other household activities. So, it is natural, that the women prayed for the safe return of their men folk, victorious in war. It was given this, that Karva Chauth festival was observed by the women in this window.

For the sake of battle going men

In ancient days, it was not just the soldiers, the kshatriya who went to war, but also those belonging to other classes of the society. For example, the agriculturists and medics also went to battle to support their warriors. This day was mainly observed for those husband folks who took part in a battle. It is this day that has permeated down to all classes of society as the Karva Chauth festival today.

SIMILAR festival, ACROSS LAND, THROUGH THE YEAR

If we see, there are other similar observances in other parts of the land through the year, observed by women for the wellbeing of their entire family.



Women Deified

In Pre-modern India, women observing Karwa Chauth were deified and worshipped. Paintings depict woman on fast as embodiment of Goddess. Also, in this land, women have been known for their valour and bravery across the times. Women have also held and fought with swords.

Selflessness of women

Such observances in present times show the selflessness of women, their caring nature and the affection they have for their husbands, their family and society.



Such timeless festivals showcase the innate steadfast nature of women and their concern for their family and near and dear. They bring out the noble qualities of women wherever they are, whatever language they may speak, whatever they may eat, whatever they may wear and however they may look!