

New Year: The most un-Indian celebration !

'Wish You A Happy New Year'! With this message people would have started greeting each other from this morning onwards through SMS, e-mails, phone calls and post cards and the 'celebration' would go on till the evening of 1 January. In what way this practice of celebrating New Year on 1st January connected with 'Bharathiya' culture? In no way! The only connection was because of the invasion by Portuguese, French and the British. Even during the British rule and for that matter even after independence, the celebration of New Year as per the Christian Calendar was never a Bharathiya custom. It has actually gained importance probably in the last three or four decades and it has spread to even villages and rural areas. It is being celebrated in a way, by which a festival must not be celebrated! It is a classic example of an 'un-Indian' celebration.

Amongst us, the citizens of India, we have Indian Christians, thanks to their 'converted' ancestors, who celebrate their New Year on 1 January and rightly too. They attend midnight prayers in Churches, visit friends and relatives later in the day, drink wine, enjoy feast, go to movies and have other entertainments. This is the typical western (Christian) way of celebrating their New Year and Indian Christians are left with no other option to follow this system, as they have moved away from the Bharathiya Culture.

But, why should Hindus celebrate this New Year? Many of the readers may find this question silly! Those who say so, must be either 'ignorant' or in a 'denial' mode. The fact of the matter is that, the number of Hindus celebrating '1 January' as 'New Year' is far more than the number of Hindus celebrating New Year as per the Hindu Almanac! There are a number of Hindu families, where the Hindu New Year is celebrated only by the older generation and the younger lots are already out of Hindu culture and sadly the older generation doesn't seem to bother about it.

People have different avenues in Star Hotels, Clubs, Theme Parks, Hill & Beach resorts, etc and those who cannot afford these have their own places such as roads, beaches, restaurants and cinema theatres. Star Hotels arrange discotheques, DJs & their music and special menu of food & beverages, etc. Married couples or pairs in love or even 'dating' couples, who drink, dance, dine and push off after spending thousands of rupees, flood those star hotels. Clubs are generally for the members only and hence a lot of families can be seen. The celebration would start with stage performances of some of the wards of the members and then a special 'Thambola' would be played and later on an 'Orchestra' or a 'Light-Music' troop would take over the stage. This is the only place

where we can see parents (mostly fathers & sometimes even mothers) drinking in front of their children and in some families, we can see 'grown up' children also drinking along with their parents. A dance floor will be there for children to play and teenagers to shake a leg and exactly at 12 'o' clock in the night, fireworks will be lit. The celebrations at the hill & beach resorts will be similar and the only difference is that they will be in a serene atmosphere away from the chaotic cities.

In all these places, Liquor companies, Jewellery and Textile manufactures, Airlines and many other business establishments would sponsor gifts, cash prizes and hampers and 'meaningful' awards like 'Best Dressed Couple', 'Best Dancing Couple', will be awarded to those couples, who dress 'little' and 'dance' more! For example, the 'Balloon Dance' is very famous and couples vie with each other to participate in it. Couples should dance without breaking or letting down the balloon placed in between them. Even children are not spared in this! Boy children and girl children will be forced to take part in the balloon dance. People will retire very late past midnight and they will not see the 'dawn' of the New Year, after celebrating the end of the Old Year, as they would be sleeping till the afternoon!

A lot of individuals, bachelors and groups of friends, who simply buy liquor from wine shops, drink them for the sake of drinking; drive their two-wheelers and four-wheelers zipping fast on the arterial roads of the cities, shouting 'Happy New Year'! These people are 'famously' called as 'Revelers' or 'road-side Romeos' and they make the lives

of policemen miserable throughout the night. Most of them are school and college students, who would be drinking without the knowledge of their parents. Many would land in the police net and many others would meet with accidents causing immense trauma to their parents. Many 'Adams' would indulge in 'Eve-teasing' and 'Eves' are not far behind in drinking, smoking and 'Adam-teasing'. These people always finish their celebration with a movie of their favorite star on the 1 January.

There are many 'Residents Welfare Associations', which organise New Year celebrations within their premises. Those people who feel shy of celebrating in hotels, clubs and resorts, but feel compelled to celebrate for the sake of it due to peer pressure, form the major part of these associations and even here, the 'tenants' would not join though they belong to the category of 'residents'. The residents associations arrange for soft drinks and a buffet with varieties of dishes prepared by the residents themselves. They conduct games for their wards and give them prizes. Some of the men secretly go to the terrace for a drink or two in between the celebration and if the celebration goes on in the terrace, they go to the parking lot and have their drinks. Some of them would forget to have a count of their drink and finally act as 'jokers' entertaining the gathering, getting a 'handful' or a 'mouthful' from their spouses after all the celebrations are over.

There is an 'ignorant' lot, which visits temples to have a 'Mid Night' Darshan. This is the most outrageous thing, which can happen to Hindu culture. As per 'Agama'

rules, Temples must not be opened during mid nights and the Deities must be allowed to rest after the late evening puja. The rules permit only 'Six-time worships' (Aaru Kaala Puja), starting from early in the morning during 'Brahmma Muhurtham' with 'Thiruppalliyezhuchchi' (waking up the Deity) with devotional hymns and traditional music) and ending in the late evening with allowing the Deity to rest. Each puja comprises of Abishekam (bathing), Alankaram (dressing), Archana (praising), Naivedyam or Nivedhanam (feeding) and Aarathi (worshipping). Midnights are considered inauspicious as per Hindu tradition and keeping the Deities awake at that time is a SIN. Even the non-Agamic temples are not supposed to be kept open during midnight.

The HR & CE Department in the atheist-Dravidian government keeps some of the Agamic-Temples also open in the name of 'New Year' worship. In this context, it must be remembered that this atheist government did not allow the special pujas for the 'Thamizh New Year' celebrations last April, as it passed a resolution in the assembly changing the Tamil New Year from 'Chithirai' (April) month to 'Thai' (January) month, with a sole motive of taking the Thamizh New Year into the Christian Calendar. Though the Hindu religious leaders have been advising the people to refrain from following this un-Hindu tradition, their advices have fallen only on deaf ears! The Hindu organisations have been trying their level best to create awareness among the people for the past few years, but only in vain due to the sad fact that the Hindus have been slowly and steadily getting alienated from their original culture, thanks to the

westernization being imposed by the different types of mass-media.

The 'secular' brigade, which mislead the gullible masses, argue that the New Year revelry is an occasion for communal harmony and ask, 'why shouldn't Hindus celebrate English New Year'? But they do not have an answer for the question, 'how many Christians celebrate Hindu New Year'? As far as they are concerned, the so-called secularism is only for the majority community and the minorities need not practice it, for they are privileged. But then, communal amity can always be maintained through expression of wishes by greeting the Christian community on their New Year celebration.

Many people say, 'there is nothing religious about New Year celebration. This kind of celebration has place only in foreign culture and Hindu festivals are normally associated with religious traditions and we cannot celebrate them in this manner. More than everything, we need a 'reason' to celebrate and foreign culture provides us with many such reasons'. But, does one really need a reason for such a celebration?

Though the 'concerned' people feel hurt and perturbed at this kind of an attitude, they feel that the practice of opening Temples and performing pujas during midnight must be stopped. This point of view must be respected not only by the government but also by the people.

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