

# Chhath Puja: A Sacred Celebration in Bihar

Category: Religion

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Chhath Puja, also known as Surya Shashti or Dala Chhath, is a significant Hindu festival celebrated primarily in the state of Bihar, India. It is dedicated to Lord Surya (the Sun God) and his consort Usha, and is observed to express gratitude and seek blessings for a prosperous life.

The word 'Chhath' means 'sixth' in Hindi, and the festival falls on the sixth day after Diwali, which usually falls in the month of October or November. The rituals of Chhath Puja involve a strict fasting period, offering prayers to the rising and setting sun, and taking a dip in holy rivers.

The origins of Chhath Puja can be traced back to ancient Vedic texts, where it is mentioned as a way to worship the Sun God for the well-being and prosperity of the family. However, the festival gained prominence in Bihar due to its deep cultural roots and the influence of the Maithil community.

Chhath Puja is a four-day long festival that begins with Nahay Khay, where devotees take a holy bath and prepare special food offerings known as 'prasad.' The second day is called Kharna, where devotees observe a strict fast and break it only after sunset, offering kheer (sweet rice pudding) and fruits to the Sun God.

The third day is the main day of Chhath Puja, known as Sandhya Arghya, where devotees gather near the banks of rivers or ponds to offer prayers to the setting sun. They stand waist-deep in water and perform various rituals, including offering fruits, sugarcane, and earthen lamps to the Sun God.

The final day is called Usha Arghya, which is observed on the morning of the fourth day. Devotees wake up before sunrise and offer prayers to the rising sun. They break their fast and distribute the prasad among family members and neighbors.

Chhath Puja holds immense significance in Bihar as it is considered a way to connect with nature and seek blessings for the well-being of the family. The festival is also a symbol of purity, discipline, and devotion. It is believed that by observing Chhath Puja with utmost dedication, one can attain salvation and be blessed with good health, prosperity, and longevity.

Chhath Puja is not just a religious festival but also a cultural extravaganza. The entire state of Bihar comes alive with vibrant decorations, traditional songs, and dance performances during this time. People from all walks of life come together to celebrate and participate in the rituals, creating a sense of unity and harmony.

The significance of Chhath Puja has spread beyond Bihar, and today it is celebrated in various parts of India and even in different countries where the Bihari diaspora resides. The festival has become a symbol of the rich cultural heritage of Bihar and is a testament to the deep-rooted traditions that

have been passed down through generations.