

## #INDIAN CULTURE

# Magh Bihu

People offer prayers to the fire, symbolizing gratitude for the bountiful harvest and seeking blessings for the future.



Magh Bihu, also known as Bhogali Bihu, is a vibrant harvest festival celebrated in Assam. It marks the end of the harvesting season and is a time of great joy, reflecting the spirit of abundance and community togetherness. This year, Magh Bihu will be celebrated on January 15, 2025, and it's time to dive into the vibrant world of traditional Assamese celebrations. This festival is a grand affair, from energetic Bihu Naas to lip-smacking delicacies.



## History

Magh Bihu, also known as Bhogali Bihu, is a vibrant harvest festival celebrated in Assam. Its roots trace back to ancient times, deeply intertwined with the rural lifestyle of the region. The festival marks the end of the harvest season and symbolizes abundance and gratitude. It likely began around 3500 BC, evolving from ancient rites related to fire and fertility. The indigenous tribes of Assam, such as the Bodos, Chutias, and Deoris, played a significant role in shaping the early customs of this celebration.

The Ahoms, who arrived in Assam around the 13th century, also contributed to its evolution. They promoted Sali-kheti, or wet rice cultivation, which significantly improved agricultural practices in the region.

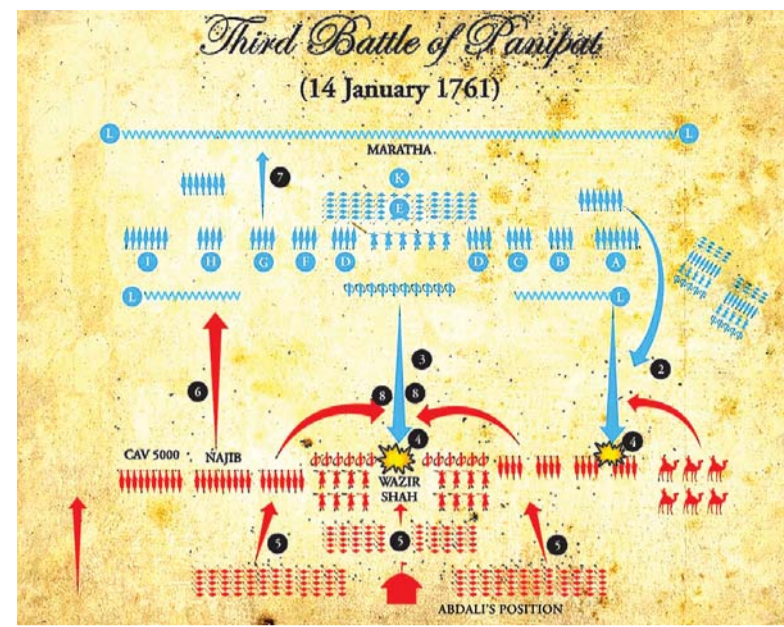
Bihu celebrations, including Magh Bihu, were institutionalized during their reign,

## Present Day Trends

Despite its ancient roots, Magh Bihu continues to be a lively and dynamic festival, embodying the spirit of Assam's rich cultural heritage. It brings people together, transcending social barriers to celebrate the land, its produce, and the community's unity. On the day of Magh Bihu, you can hear laughter, music, and delicious aromas. Traditional games like buffalo fights and egg-throwing contests add to the excitement. The Meji

fire, made of bamboo and hay, burns away the old and welcomes the new agricultural cycle.

Once the fire dies down, its ashes are scattered in the fields to enhance soil fertility, embodying the festival's deep connection to nature and farming. This lively celebration not only honours the land's bounty but also strengthens community bonds, making it a cherished time for all who participate.



# Why a Winning Battle was Lost

PART:4



urrani had both numeric as well as qualitative superiority over Marathas. The combined Afghan army was much larger than that of Marathas. Though the infantry of Marathas was organized along European lines, and their army had some of the best French-made guns of the time, their artillery was static and lacked mobility against the fast-moving Afghan forces.

Moreover, the senior Maratha chiefs constantly bickered with one another. Each had ambitions of carving out their independent states and had no interest in fighting against a common enemy. Some of them did not support the idea of a pitched battle and wanted to fight using guerrilla tactics instead of charging the enemy head-on, which they were perfect at. The Marathas were fighting alone at a place which was 1000 miles away from their capital, Pune. Raghunath Rao was supposed to go north to reinforce the army.

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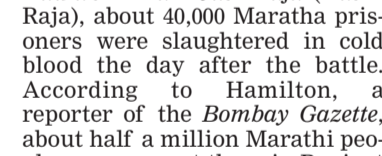


Balaji Baji Rao.

If Holkar had remained in the battlefield, the Maratha defeat would have been delayed but not averted. Ahmad Shah's superiority in pitched battle could've been averted by guerrilla warfare, as advised by Malhar Rao Holkar. However, it is described as impossible to implement due to the camp followers of Bhuau's army, and the general quality of his men. It is also believed that the Afghans would not be susceptible to such tactics, due to the Afghan horses being able to outmaneuver the Marathas in battle. Abdali was in no position to maintain his field army in India indefinitely due to external threats.

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## #THE BATTLE OF ALL BATTLES



### Rudyard Kipling's PANIPAT

“Thrice thirty thousand men were we before the mists had cleared, The low white mists of morning heard the war-cries scream and bray; We called upon Bhavani and We gripped them by the beard, We rolled upon them like a flood and washed their ranks away!”

“The children of the hills of the Khoost before Our lances ran, We drove the black Rohillas back as cattle to the pen; It was then We needed Mulhar Rao to end what

redder lance and blade- Above the dark Aparas fleed, beneath us splashed the blood, And, belying black against the dust, the Bhagwa Jhanda swayed.”

“Description of Panipat taken from Rudyard Kipling's 'With Scindia to Delhi.' The poem was based on the oral records of a veteran Maratha on the Third Battle of Panipat (1761), fought between Durrani-Rohilla Pashtun invaders and the Hindu Maratha Empire.

### Siyar-ut-Mutakhirin says

“The unhappy prisoners were paraded in long lines, given a little parched grain and a drink of water, and beheaded, and the women and children, who survived, were driven off as slaves, twenty-two thousand, many of them of the highest rank in the land.”

### The Aftermath And Maratha Resurrection

Mahadaji Shinde restored Maratha domination over northern India, within a decade after the war. The bodies of Vishwasrao and Bhuau were recovered by the Marathas and were cremated according to their customs. Bhuau's wife, Parvatibai, was saved by Holkar, as per the directions of Bhuau, and eventually returned to Pune. Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao, uninformed about the fate of his army, was crossing the Narmada with a relief force and supplies when he heard of the defeat. He returned to Pune and never recovered from the shock of the debacle at Panipat.

According to Kashi Raja Pundit, “It was Balaji Baji Rao's love of pleasure which was responsible for Panipat. He delayed at Paithan, celebrating his second marriage, until December 27, when it was too late.” The message, that was delivered in Marathi, was thus...

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### 'Deh Lakkh Chooriyaan Tooti'

Vishvas Patil, the author of the phenomenally successful Marathi book *Panipat*, said in a TV interview that since it was Dakshinayan time, the Sun's rays were directly incident on the eyes of the starving soldiers and horses of the Maratha cavalry. Dakshinayan is a celestial event that happens on *Makara Sankranti*, and marks the transition of the Sun into the zodiac sign, Makar (Capricorn). Sadly, it became the Maratha army's undoing.

Jankoji Scindia was taken prisoner and executed at the instigation of Najib Ibrahim Khan Gardi was tortured and executed by enraged Afghan soldiers. The Marathas never fully recovered from the loss at Panipat, but they remained the largest empire in the Indian subcontinent and managed to retake Delhi ten years later. However, their claim over all of India ended with the three Anglo-Maratha Wars, in the early 19th century. The Jats, under Suraj Mal, benefited significantly from not participating in the Battle of Panipat. They provided considerable assistance to the Marathas so



## Mahayana New Year

Mahayana New Year, also known as 'Vesak', is a traditional Buddhist holiday that commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and passing of the Buddha. It is considered one of the most important events in the Buddhist calendar. The origins of the holiday can be traced back to ancient India, where the Buddha lived and taught. It is believed that the holiday was first celebrated by Buddhist monks and nuns, who would gather together to pay tribute to the Buddha. Over time, the holiday spread to other regions in Asia, and eventually to other parts of the world, becoming a widely celebrated event among Mahayana Buddhists.



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of India), to recognise Shah Alam II as Emperor. Ahmad Shah also appointed Najib-ud-Daula as ostensible regent to the Mughal Emperor. In addition, Najib and Munir-ud-Daula agreed to pay to Abdali, on behalf of the Mughal emperor an annual tribute of four million rupees, which was never actually paid. This was to be Ahmad Shah's final major expedition to North India, as the losses in the battle left him without the capacity to wage any further war against the Marathas, as he became increasingly preoccupied with the rise of the Sikhs. Thus, he retreated and never invaded Delhi after that. Shah Shuja's forces (including Persian advisers) played a decisive role in collecting intelligence against the Maratha forces and was notorious in ambushing the leading in hundreds of casualties.

After the Battle of Panipat, the services of the Rohillas were rewarded by grants of Shikohabad to Nawab Faizullah Khan and of Jalesar and Firozabad to Nawab Saadullah Khan. Najib Khan proved to be an effective ruler, who restored Delhi to a large extent. However, after his death in 1770, the Rohillas were defeated by the forces of the British East India Company. Najib died on 30 October, 1770.

To save their kingdom, the Mughals once again changed sides and welcomed the Afghans to Delhi. The Mughals remained in nominal control over small areas of India, but were never a force again. The empire officially ended in 1857 when its last emperor Bahadur Shah II, was accused of being involved in the Indian Rebellion and exiled. The result of the battle was the temporary halting of further Maratha advances in the north and destabilisation of their territories for roughly ten years. This period is marked by the reign of Peshwa Madhav Rao, who is credited with the revival of Maratha domination following the defeat at Panipat. In 1771, ten years after Panipat, Mahadji Shinde led a large Maratha army into northern India in a counter-offensive, in which he, along with others, re-established the fallen Maratha supremacy in the area and punished refractory powers that had either sided with the Afghans, such as the Rohillas, or had shaken off Maratha domination after Panipat. But their success was short-lived. Crippled by Madhav Rao's untimely death at the age of 28, infighting ensued among Maratha chiefs soon after, and they were ultimately defeated and annexed by the British East India Company administration.

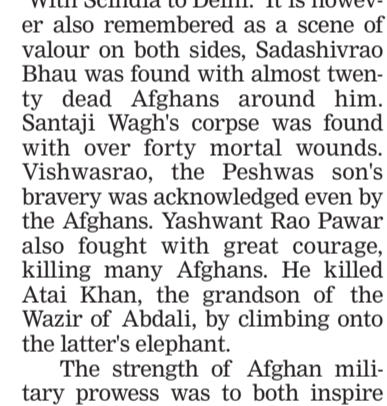
This was an epic battle and lives even today in the conscious memories of north Indians. But with the Marathas, it has permeated

their daily lives in so many ways. The Marathi term 'संक्रान्ति' (Sankranti), meaning 'Sankranti has befallen us', is said to have originated from the events of the battle. There are some verbs in Marathi language related to this loss as 'चर्चित नष्ट' (a major loss has happened). This verb is even today used in Marathi language. A common pun is 'जमनाच विजय पावितर नष्ट' (we lost our own (Vishvas) faith since Panipat). Many historians, including British historians of the time, have argued that had it not been for the weakening of the Maratha power at Panipat, the British might never have had a strong foothold in India.

The strength of Afghan military prowess was to both inspire hope in many orthodox Muslims, Mughal royalists and fear in the British. However, the real truth of so many battle-hardened Afghans, killed in the struggle with the Marathas, never allowed them to dream of controlling the Mughal Empire realistically again. On the other side, Marathas, possibly one of the truly real Indian military powers left capable of challenging the British, were fatally weakened by the defeat and could not mount a serious challenge in the Anglo-Maratha wars 50 years later.

Conclusion...

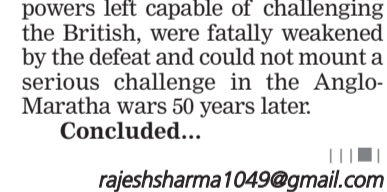
rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



Malhar Rao Holkar.

Conclusion...

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



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rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



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## #TRIED & TASTED

# Til Ka Tyohaar!

Sesame and jaggery play a very significant role in the celebrations, as they are seasonal and also incredible for our bodies.

The nation is drenched in the festive spirit, and why not? After the roller-coaster of a year, we finally made it to the new one, and now we are in midst of festivities. *Makar Sankranti* is one of our biggest festivals of all times. Makar Sankranti is an auspicious day for Hindus from all over the world. It is celebrated with fanfare and festivities, especially in India. With some different names, traditions and culture, few things remain same throughout. Sesame or *til* is an ingredient widely used in recipes, from almost all parts of India, when it comes to Makar Sankranti. The basic ingredient remaining more or less the same, you will be surprised to find the variation in taste. Here are some recipes popularly made on Makar Sankranti.



### Til Ki Barfi



Keeping the ingredients same as above and the procedure up to number 5 same, you can make sesame or *til barfi* by greasing a plate with ghee and spreading the above mixture on it. Once it settles, you can cut them into shape you like, and take out the barfis from the plate after cooling down of the mixture. You can reduce jaggery with sugar to have a different taste.

### Til Ke Laddoo

**Ingredients**

- Sesame seeds - 1 cup
- Jaggery - 1 cup
- Ghee or clarified butter - 2 table spoon
- Crushed cardamom - 1/2 tea spoon
- Water - 1/2 cup

**Preparation**

1. Take a pan and roast the sesame seeds until they are light brown. You will have the aroma of roasted sesame seeds.
2. Set aside the seeds in a bowl.
3. Now, heat water and jaggery together on a low flame.
4. When the jaggery starts

caramelizing, check the caramel by putting a drop of it in cold water. If it forms a ball, it is done.

5. Switch off the gas and put ghee, roasted sesame seeds and crushed cardamom in the jaggery and mix thoroughly. This has to be done as fast as possible so that the sweetness is absorbed and conceived in the entire mixture.
6. Make the *laddoos* while the mixture is warm. You can moisten your hands with cold water, if you find things very hot.
7. You can store these laddoos for even more than a month.

### Til Revri



Til Revri.

**Ingredients**

- Sesame seeds - 1/2 cup
- Water - 2 table spoon
- Cardamom powder - 1/4 cup
- Sugar - 1/2 cup
- Ghee - 1 tsp

**Preparation**

1. Dry roast the sesame seeds and keep aside. Do not overdo them. Make sure that the colour does not change.
2. Now, heat the water with sugar.
3. Add ghee and cardamom powder to it.
4. Once it boils, add the sesame seeds and mix.
5. Switch off the gas stove when you see that the mixture is leaving the sides of the pan.
6. Take the mixture and drop it in small portions on a greased plate and let it cool.
7. Remove and store in an airtight container.

### Til Chikki



Til Chikki.

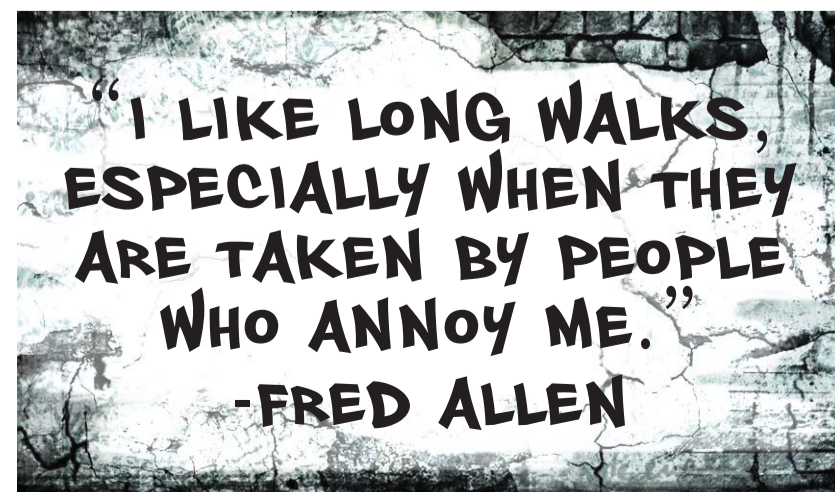
**Ingredients**

- Til or sesame seeds - 3/4 cup
- Jaggery - 1/2 cup
- Ghee - 1 1/2 cup

**Preparation**

1. Heat a pan and dry roast the sesame seeds till they are light brown. Remove the seeds in a bowl and keep aside.
2. Add ghee in the pan, and then, add jaggery to it. Keep stirring and cook for 3 minutes.
3. Switch off the flame and add the roasted sesame seeds to it. Mix well.
4. Grease a plate and spread this mixture on it. Let it cool before you cut it into pieces and serve.

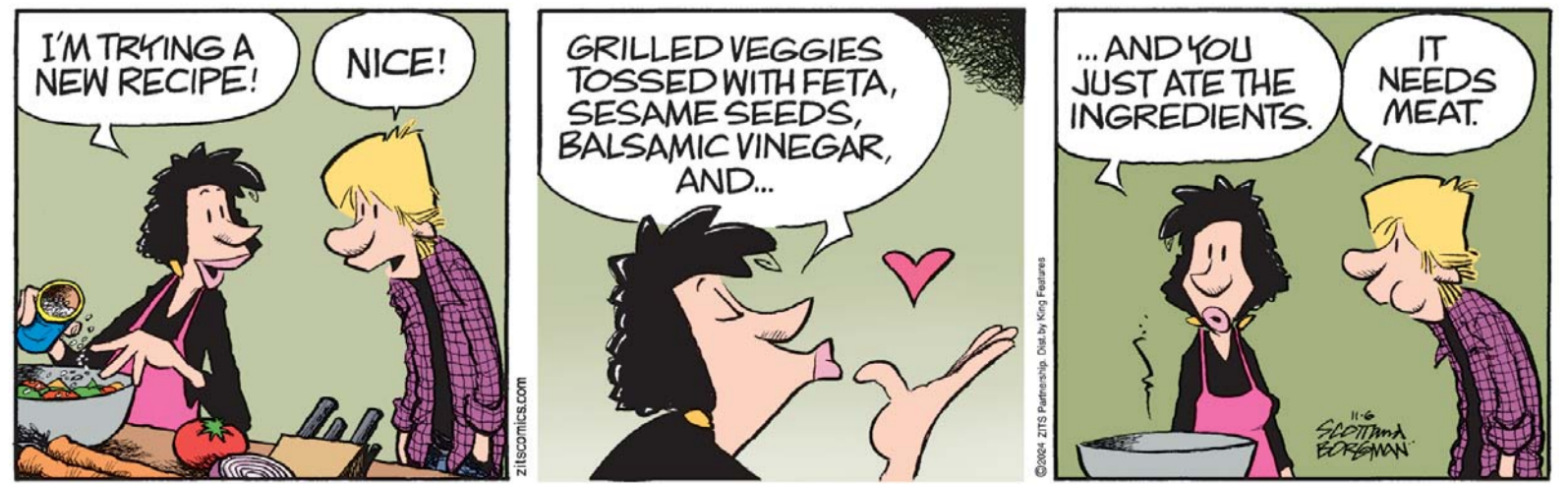
## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



## ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman