



Every year **Christmas Day** is celebrated on 25th December all over the World. Celebrations of Christmas festival begin on the eve of Christmas i.e. 24th of December and continue till New Year's Day. Christmas Day called '*Bada Din*' (Big Day) in Hindi is a national holiday in India. People from all religions join their Christian friends to make the most of the joyous celebrations. Particularly, Christians across the country celebrate Christmas Day by participating in special masses organized in churches.



The Legend



Widely known, the customs of Christmas came from the traditional celebration of the birth of **Christ**. It is celebrated as a universal festival through out the nation. The first mention of 25th December as the birth date of Jesus occurred in 336 A.D. in an early Roman calendar. That day onwards this date is celebrated as the birth date of Jesus. Later on it combined with the harvest and winter solstice festivals in ancient Rome. In India this festival has a special significance since India is known for its unity in diversity worldwide.

Preparations for Christmas

In every part of India Christmas is joyfully celebrated by people of all religions and communities. In Christian households, preparations for Christmas begin at least a month in advance. People get their homes whitewashed and indulge in spring cleaning of the house to give it a fresh new look. Ladies start preparations for the traditional Christmas cake and other cuisines which are anxiously awaited not just by the entire family but also by the neighbours. Christmas Gifts are also bought for friends, relatives and kids in the family.



Decorations for Christmas

One of the unique features of Christmas among all Indians is the use of banana or mango tree for decoration instead of traditional pine tree. This is the time for people to flaunt their creativity. They decorate these trees with colorful ribbons, blinking lights, stars and sparkled balls and use poinsettia flower to decorate churches. In South India, people put oil-lamps of clay on their flat roof-tops to let everyone feel the presence of God in light. Days before Christmas market places, shop, streets and churches are decorated with scenes of nativity, lights and stars. The local Indian customs and tradition have a massive impact on the Indian Christians. This is visible in their decoration as many Indian Christians decorate their houses with mango leaves. Churches often have an Evening Service on Christmas and are fabulously decorated with poinsettias and candles. Caroling processions on streets and thoroughfares can also be seen.



Celebration of Christmas Day

Christians in India attend Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and light votive candles in the church. The ritual is followed by Christmas carol, balls on the Christmas day, cutting Christmas cake and tempting Christmas meals. Exchanging gifts and cards is an important part of Christmas festival. Children in particular, enjoy the festival the most as they get to participate in the native plays and Christmas carnivals conducted by schools or socio-cultural clubs. They also receive gifts from their favorite Santa Claus.



Celebration of Christmas Day in Orissa

In Orissa Christmas Day is celebrated with pomp, gaiety and devotion. Schools run by Christian missionaries celebrate Christmas by organizing nativity plays which depict the birth of Jesus Christ. Carols, songs and dramas make these celebrations even more joyful. Even non-Christian students enthusiastically participate in such celebrations. Besides, many churches and missionary go on visiting Rehabilitation Centers, Orphanage, Destitute Homes, Old Age Homes and distribute food items, clothes and gifts to the needy people.



The festival of Christmas not only celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ but also conveys his message of love, tolerance and brotherhood. It's a celebration of humanity and mankind. Though Christmas is a primary festival of the Christian calendar but it has a special significance in everyone's life.