

A Monthly Bulletin for the Villages, Gaothans and Koliwadās of Mumbai, Thane, Vasai and Raigad District



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Public Trust Registration No: F-57349(MUMBAI)



Uplifting the Village Community

GAOVoice

गावठाण वॉईस

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One Village !

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Lets Make Agera Great Again



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MGP ESTORY

A Special write up by MGP Team

AGERYAA TUKUN HAATI PAALU VALLAANCHYAA RITI Reviving Tradition, the East Indian Way

Around 10 years ago Agera was a forgotten tradition in many parishes. A few parishes kept on the tradition in whatever small way they could. MGP was one of the associations that took the initiative to revive this festival which was slowly fading with each passing year.

Agera was a big festival when a large section of our community had fields and farming was one of the main occupations. It was a special day as our community celebrated this Harvest Festival as a Thanksgiving to God for blessing the family and the village with a good harvest. As our fields vanished due to development the festival did not have a connect with the East Indian community in the city. Those staying on Dharavi Beth Island, Raigad and Vasai continue to celebrate Agera in the traditional way.

MGP started first around 10 years ago by arranging for paddy required by those in the city for the Agera festival. In the last more than 10 years Agera is fast catching up and more parishes are reviving this tradition and some have made their Agera celebrations bigger.

MGP targets to reach more than 100 parishes celebrating Agera this year. In the coming years we will encourage every parish with East Indian community to celebrate Agera. A communication will be sent to the Archdiocese Hierarchy for support from local parishes in celebrating the harvest festival of the Indigenous people, the East Indian Community. A request will also be made to call this special day as Agera and not just Thanksgiving Day. Special guidelines for this festival will be issued to the East Indian Community for celebrating Agera.

MGP started the Year 2017 with the theme – Uplift! Empower! Restore! Revive! and in keeping with this theme we have tried our very best to Revive our Traditions. In mid-September we bought back memories of the Procession of Mount Mary from Mahim Church to the Mount Mary Church and we have made this an annual tradition. We look forward to Revive many of our Traditions which have been forgotten and we look forward to the support of our community.

The word Agera sounds fresh and brings in a feeling of a new beginning. MGP looks forward with a new mindset to work for our community in a conducive way with increased commitment and dedication. The journey ahead is surely not going to be smooth but with Gods Presence we are sure we will succeed in our own little way.

Lets joyously hold the paddy sheaves in our hands as we join in prayerful procession Thanking God for a Good Harvest. MGP Wishes you all a Happy Agera. Sukhala!

MOBAI GAOTHAN PANCHAYAT - MEMBERSHIP PLAN

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Membership Fee	1,000	2,500	5,000	10,000	25,000	1,00,000
Membership Monthly Scheme	NA	NA	500	1,000	2,500	10,000
Vive Queimada	10% Discount	20% Discount	30% Discount	40% Discount	50% Discount	Complimentary
EI Books	NA	NA	10%	20%	30%	Complimentary
Gaothan Voice	Doorstep Delivery	Doorstep Delivery	Doorstep Delivery	Doorstep Delivery	Doorstep Delivery	Doorstep Delivery
MGP Events	NA	NA	NA	Free Entry	Free Entry	Free Entry
EI Day	NA	NA	Free Pass	Free Pass	Free Pass	Free Pass
EI Calendar	Free 1 Copy	Free 2 Copy	Free Upto 5 Copies	Free Upto 10 Copies	Free Upto 20 Copies	Copies as per Request
Per Year Total Benefits	500	1000	1500	2000	4000	10000

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EAST INDIAN PUNCH

The Mouthpiece of the East Indian Community

AAPLAA GAAV! AAPLAA AGERA! Lets Make Agera Great Again

Gleason Barretto, Old Kurla

Appreciation for the farmers who provide us with our food grains and a thanksgiving to God for blessing us with a good harvest, the essence of the Agera festival. The farmers were called Kulbis and this festival was celebrated with great enthusiasm. Each farmer offered their first harvest to the Church. The procession started from a field to the Church and it began with the priest cutting some sheaves of paddy. Each family collects their sheaves of paddy to be kept at the altar or affixed at the entrance door. An offering of freshly plucked vegetables and fruits are offered in many villages.

Gaothans with East Indian population, should celebrate this traditional festival to showcase their culture to the other communities that reside in the vicinity. The Gaothankars should try to have a celebration in the village bylanes or squares and also a procession through the Gaothans will be ideal. Gaothans are the base of the entire Agera Celebrations with a majority of the Processions starting from the Gaothan Holy crosses or the fields. Number of people that Participated in the Celebrations have increased and so have the number of Gaothans. MGP targets a total of 100+ Gaothans to Participate in the Agera Celebrations this year. MGP is just a facilitator and the credit goes out to local parishes, associations and social workers for celebrating and promoting Agera.

Encouragement to Gaothans groups and individuals to ensure this festival is celebrated, as it is the need of the times. MGP Team is willing to support and encourage more villages to celebrate this traditional harvest festival as a part of the revival plan. Rekla, the traditional mode of transport with horses or bullocks are now a must in the Agera procession. These Reklas are beautifully decorated and have the priest seated during the procession. The Traditional East Indian brass band adds music and festivity to the procession and also after the holy mass.

Recognising groups that have taken bigger steps to make Agera great again needs to be awarded. In the last few years many groups have gone one step forward to make this festival livelier and more enjoyable. Local groups are now playing an active role for Agera by arranging the paddy, brass band, reklas and refreshments. East Indian Marathi mass is being held in a parish. In some parishes after mass, tea is served with hot fugyas as people greet each other on this Harvest festival and in some villages even traditional sweets like Lapshi and Mugoori is served. Mega events are being planned this year for Agera at Kurla, Malad and Sahar. We also have new Villages celebrating this festival after a gap of few decades at Dadar, Dharavi and Kandivali.

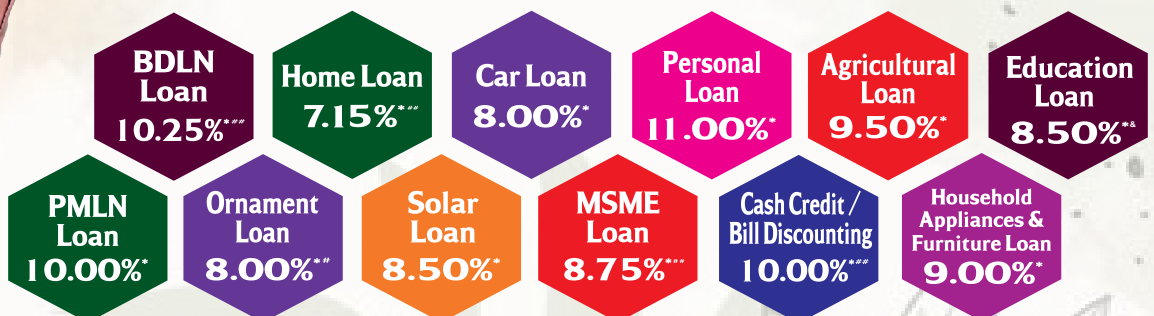
Awareness of this festival not only in our Gaothans or parishes, but also in the city, State, Nation and the World needs to be planned. Creating awareness about this Harvest festival of the Indigenous People of Mumbai needs to be publicised. Around 10 Years ago Agera Celebrations were diminishing. Modernisation and lack of farming lands in most parts of the city was the cause. MGP Team took up the most challenging task of reviving Agera, something considered impossible by many. We started on a small note and gradually things picked up. In the last few years, we painted the city with a majority of the East Indian Community dressed in Traditional Lagra. The Lagra fame, also remains one of MGPs successful Revival stories. Now that we witness almost all Gaothans celebrating Agera we now focus on the entire city and state to be aware of this harvest festival of the East Indian Community. Wishing you all a Happy Agera. May this harvest festival bless your homes with abundance of food and happiness



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AGERA – MAHARASHTRA'S NATIVE HARVEST FESTIVAL

Around 10 years ago Agera was a forgotten tradition in many parishes. A few parishes kept on the tradition in whatever small way they could. Mobai Gaothan Panchayat was one of the associations that took the initiative to revive this festival which was slowly fading with each passing year. Agera was a big festival when a large section of our community had fields and farming was one of the main occupations. It was a special day as our community celebrated this Harvest Festival as a Thanksgiving to God for blessing the family and the village with a good harvest. As our fields vanished due to development the festival did not have a connect with the East Indian community in the city.

The East Indian Community, sons-of-soil of Bombay, Thane, Raigad and Vasai celebrate Agera on the first Sunday in October. The Archdiocese in recent times also celebrates the Native Harvest Festival, Agera as "Thanksgivingday". The feast is celebrated across East Indian Gaothans with great enthusiasm. The local East Indian Groups based in urban areas are making efforts to revive this great harvest festival of Agera in the traditional way. In many villages in Manori-Gorai-Uttan, Vasai, Thane and Raigad the festival has always been celebrated the traditional way as many families continue to follow their occupation of farming. While the farming villages of the East Indian Community celebrate Agera as per tradition followed for generations, those in the city generally begin their celebrations from the Holy Cross in the Gaothans.

MGP started first around 10 years ago by arranging for paddy required by those in the city for the Agera festival. In the last more than 10 years Agera is slowly catching up and more parishes are reviving this tradition and some have made their Agera celebrations bigger. St. John's East Indian Community, Marol organizes a procession from the Gaothan to the Church followed by mass and a Cultural Programme. Holy Family Church, Chakala will have processions from 4 East Indian Gaothans – Gundavli, JB Nagar, Parsi wadi and Chakala meeting at the Church for a joint Eucharistic celebration. Agera celebration has got better each passing year at Holy Cross Church Kurla and is organized by USWA. The USWA members grow paddy in the church backyard about a month before Agera and celebrate the festival in the traditional way. The priest goes to the backyard where the members cut paddy in their traditional outfits followed by blessing and procession to Church.

The Indigenous People have marked Agera in their calendar, yet another big day to celebrate for the East Indian Community. This year Agera will be celebrated on Sunday, 2nd October and MGP targets to have this festival celebrated at 100 Gaothans. Wishing you all a Happy Agera. May this harvest festival bless your homes with abundance of food and happiness

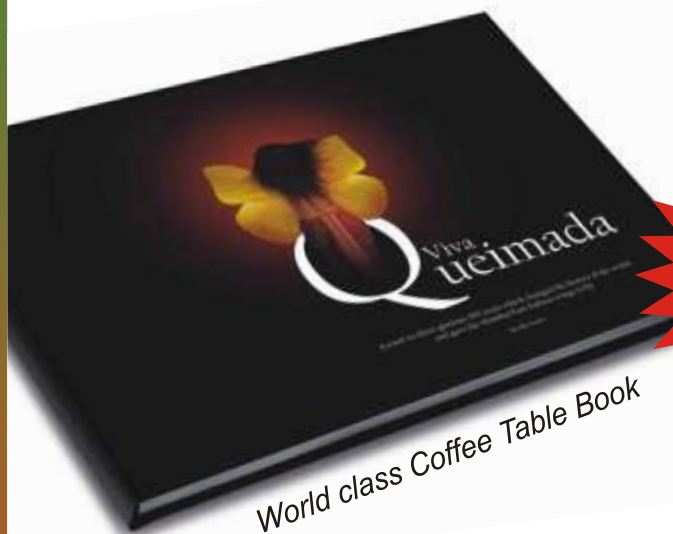
MGP Guidelines for Agera Celebrations

- *Start Procession from a Holy Cross in the Village or nearest paddy field (the priest cuts a few sheaves of paddy)
- *In procession the bundles of paddy to be carried by ladies in traditional Lugra or men in traditional Surkhas
- *East Indian brass band or Vanzootar (local tribal band) to be a part of the procession
- *Ideally hire a Tonga, Rekla or Bullock cart as a part of procession
- *The procession enters church where the paddy is kept near the altar for blessing
- *Offerings of fresh fruits and vegetables to be made during offertory or when the procession enters the church
- *After mass the East Indians in traditional attire to distribute the paddy
- *East Indian band to play some celebration songs after mass
- *Stalls selling East Indian food to be set up especially harvest related food stuff
- *The families go back home and affix the paddy on their entrance door or place it on the altar
- *The family prepares a traditional meal keeping the harvest festival in mind
- *Each East Indian family have the afternoon meal together with a thanksgiving prayer
- *Before the meal the family serves homemade wine or Khimad calling out "Sukhala" the East Indian way
- *In the evening the families visit their friends and relatives or join the village get-together.



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- *The First Religious structure in Bombay Archdiocese to be dedicated to our Native Saint.
- *The Chapel is likely to be inaugurated in the year 2023.
- *We look forward for Support from Experts (Designers, architects, Sculptors, fabricators, etc) in building this Chapel.
- *Contributions by Cheque or in kind are welcome.
- *We plan to get relics from Japan and promote pilgrimage to Nagasaki.
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