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### “Dahi Handi Festival”

Dahi Handi is an Indian festival, celebrated every August/September, that involves making a human pyramid and breaking an earthen pot filled with curd, tied at a convenient height. This event is based on the legend of childhood of Lord Krishna. In His childhood, he was very fond of the curd and the butter. The child-god Krishna and his friends used to form human pyramids to break pots hung from the ceilings of neighbourhood houses, in order to steal curd and butter.

Dahi Handi is part of the main festival Gokulashtami, which is known as Krishna Janmashtami in the rest of the country, and celebrates the birth of Krishna. Dahi handi is celebrated on the next of Krishna Janmashtami. This festival is popular in the state of Goa & Maharashtra and specially in Mumbai.

The event involves making a human pyramid and breaking an earthen pot filled with milk, curd, butter, fruits and water which is hung at a convenient height. There is a huge prize money associated with each dahi handi. Sometimes the prize money is added to the pot instead.

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The terms govinda (another name of Krishna) is used to refer to the people who participate in forming this human pyramid. These groups are called mandals and they go around the local areas, attempting to break as many pots as possible during the event. Every year thousands of people and hundreds of govinda teams gather at Mumbai and Thane's Dahi Handi events. Traditionally, spectators threw water on the participants to deter them. The pyramid formation is often accompanied by crowds, music and dancing. The participants form a pyramid consisting usually below 9-tiers, and are given three attempts to break the earthen pot.

The prize money for the events usually range between \$1,500 – US\$18,000, depending on the organizers and its sponsors. Each year, the prizes and scale of the celebrations increase due to the participation of political parties and commercialisation. Each party sponsors its own set of mandals. Their involvement has increased in the 2000s, thereby increasing competition and prize money. Thus, numerous teams compete against each other in successive events for the prizes throughout the city.

In 2012, a mandal called Jai Jawan Govinda Pathak from Mumbai, made an entry into the Guinness World Record by forming a human pyramid of 9-tiers 43.79 feet at the Dahi Handi event held in Thane (the previous record was held by Spain since 1981).

The presence of these mass celebrations cause traffic congestion and problems like excessive littering, sound pollution etc.... The number of injuries increased due to higher competition since 2000. The government of Maharashtra banned children below 12 years from participating in 2014. The Bombay High Court later ruled in August that the minimum age should be raised to 18 years and height of the pyramid should be no more than 20 feet due to safety reasons.

***"Don't limit a child to your own learning, for he was born in another time"***

- Rabindranath Tagore (1861 – 1941)

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