

[Lord Hanuman's Festival](#)

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Residents of Lucknow and pilgrims celebrate the month-long Bada Mangal throughout the region

Gitanjali Chak, Lucknow, India

These days, the mercury hovers around a scorching 113 degrees Fahrenheit in Lucknow, the capital of the State of Uttar Pradesh. You can literally feel the ground beneath your feet burn. But for devotees of Lord Hanumanji making their way towards the Naya Hanuman Mandir in the locality of Aliganj, the heat means little as they are gripped by a religious fervor so intense that the seasonal hot winds, called loo locally, melt into insignificance. The occasion is Bada Mangal, which is celebrated on every Tuesday falling in the month of May, or Jeshtha on the Hindu calendar. The first Bada Mangal is celebrated on the birthday of Lord Hanuman May 8 this year. In Lucknow the festivities are held on a very large scale at the various Hanuman temples in the city. Lord Hanuman blesses all those who offer Him prayers during Bada Mangal.

The main celebrations are held at the Naya Hanuman Mandir, which draws thousands of devotees with chants of "Jai Bajrang Bali" and "Jai Hanuman" filling the air. Long queues are seen, with mothers shielding their infants from the blazing sun as they wait for hours to receive Hanumanji's blessings. Some passionate devotees reach the temples by rolling down the

streets as a form of penance, oblivious to the sweltering heat, evoking awe among passersby. A huge crowd of the devout also visits the Gulacheen Temple, where the main Deity is a Panchmukha (five-faced) Hanuman statue.

The festival is, in a way, a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity, too. According to lore, the Naya Hanuman Mandir was built by Muslim queen Rabia Begum. She was blessed with a child when she offered prayers to Hanumanji. Thereafter she initiated the tradition of the mela which continues to be held every year.