CHAPTER IV

FESTIVALS OF FRANCE
CHAPTER IV

FESTIVALS OF FRANCE

France is one of the most rich and leading country of North-Western Europe. French Republic is equally a major agricultural producer as well as industrial power of the world. Surrounded by Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, France represents a diverse geographical scenario. From untold ages it has been the land of war. From the time of Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte to Adolf Hitler, the land witnesses various political turmoil and those war episodes still have their influences on the people of the land and because of that most of the National festival of France are associated with political movement. Bastille Day (1789), Armistice Day (1918), Labor Day (1935) and Victory Day (1945) are the major National festivals of France celebrated in specific days. On the other hand, France is a secular country and it follows the principle of freedom of religion in practicing secularism. Major portion of French population are Christians and Roman Catholic. Hence Jesus Christ and church services play a vital role in the life of the majority of the people of that country. Most of the widely celebrated festivals of France are concentrated in and around of Jesus Christ. Jesus birthday, crucifixion, Resurrection are celebrated there as Christmas (Nöel), Good Friday (Le Vendredi Saint), Easter (Pâque) in France. Besides Roman Catholic, a large portion of migrated people
belongs to different religion are peacefully inhabited at France from a long time and their festivals are also celebrated with the equal zeal and joy.

Table 4.1: Name of the English months and corresponding French months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>English months</th>
<th>French months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Janvier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Fevrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Mars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>Avril</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Mai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Juin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>Juillet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>Aout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Septembre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Otobra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Novembra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Decembre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides these, there are so many regional festivals practiced in nook and corner of the country. French people are music lovers and fond of food. There are some festivals like Fête de la Musique, Avignon festivals are some musical and cultural festivals which have already received the status of National festival. France is a very big country and it is not possible to elaborate all the festivals of the country. So, in this chapter the researcher has focused on some of the traditional and prime festivals included in the French National calendar.
Table 4.2: Festivals of France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>English name</th>
<th>Local name</th>
<th>Nature of festival</th>
<th>Time of celebration</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New Year’s Day</td>
<td>Jour de l’an /Premier de l’an</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>1st January</td>
<td>New Year Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Epiphany</td>
<td>Fête de Rois</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>6th January</td>
<td>First Sunday after 1st January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Candlemass</td>
<td>Fête de la Lumiére/Jour des Crépes</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>2nd February</td>
<td>Commemoration of the purification of Virgin Merry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lemon Festival</td>
<td>Fête du Citron</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>It is a fruit festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Carnival of Nice</td>
<td>Carnival of Nice</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>February-March</td>
<td>It is an occasion of feasting and merry making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kite Festival</td>
<td>Kite Festival</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>To promote the kite flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Violet Festival</td>
<td>Fête des Violette</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>March-April</td>
<td>To welcome the spring season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>Vendredi Saint</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>March-April</td>
<td>Crucifixion of Jesus Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>Pâque</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>March-April</td>
<td>In commemoration of Resurrection of Jesus Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mardi Gras</td>
<td>Fat Tuesday, Pancake day</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>The day before Lent</td>
<td>Using up all the fat foods before Lent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Lent</td>
<td>Lent</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>Forty days before Easter</td>
<td>In commemoration of Jesus’s forty days anguish in desert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Holy Week</td>
<td>Great Week</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>Last week of Lent</td>
<td>Observed in memory of last week events of Jesus Christ’s earthly life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Palm Sunday</td>
<td>Palm Sunday</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>First day of Holy week</td>
<td>Celebrated in memory of Jesus Christ’s triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Maunday Thursday</td>
<td>Jeudi Saint</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>Thursday of Holy week</td>
<td>On this day Jesus with his disciples had his last meal before his death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>May Day</td>
<td>Le Fête de la Travail</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>1st May</td>
<td>Celebrated in honour of workers right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>WWII Victory Day</td>
<td>La Fête de la Victoire</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>8th May</td>
<td>End of six years long second world war and freedom of France from Nazi oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Petecost</td>
<td>Le Pentecote</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>May June (fifteenth day after Easter)</td>
<td>Sign of thanks giving to holy spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Ascension</td>
<td>l'Ascension</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Jesus promised to send his holy spirit to his disciples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Canne Film Festival</td>
<td>Festival de Cannees</td>
<td>Not Fixed</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>To promote films at international level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mothers’ Day</td>
<td>Fête des Mères</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>Last Sunday of May</td>
<td>This special day dedicated in honour of Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Music Festival</td>
<td>Fête de la Musique</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>21st June</td>
<td>To promote different genres of music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bastille Day</td>
<td>Le Fête National</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>14th July</td>
<td>In commemoration of storming of Bastille Fortress and end of monarchy in France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Cannes International Fireworks Festival</td>
<td>Festival of Cannes Pyrotechnic Art</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>July-August</td>
<td>To promote fireworks as an art form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Carrot Festival</td>
<td>Fête de la Carotte</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>Second Saturday of August month</td>
<td>To promote carrot as leading export agricultural product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary</td>
<td>L’Asomption</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>15th August</td>
<td>Virgin Mary’s departure from earthly life and assumption into heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Water Jousting Festival</td>
<td>Joutes Nautiques</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>August-September</td>
<td>It is a local festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Le Festival International des</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>April-</td>
<td>To provide exceptional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Garden Festival</td>
<td>Jardins</td>
<td></td>
<td>October</td>
<td>approach of flower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Chocolate</td>
<td>Salon du Chocolat</td>
<td>Not fixed</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>To introduce unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Festival</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>varieties of chocolates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>All Saints Day</td>
<td>Le Toussaint</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>To honour deceased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Armistice Day</td>
<td>L’Armistice</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>In memory of end of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Festival of</td>
<td>Fête des Lumières</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>To express thankfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Light</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>Nöel</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>25th</td>
<td>Birth day of Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.1 New Year’s Day (Jour de l’an or Premier de l’an)

1st January is celebrated as the New Year festival which is locally termed as Jour de l’an or Premier de l’an in France. To welcome New Year and give farewell to the old year, the festival of Jour de l’an is celebrated by French with great enthusiasm. Before 1564, the first day of the year falls on April 1st in relation to the Annunciation to Merry and the custom of exchanging gift. 1564, King Charles IX of France declare 1st January as the first day of the year. In 1582, Pope Gregory
extended this measure to include all of Christianity and the use of Gregorian calendar, which thus began the year on 1st January spread around the world(http://www.france.fr/en/celebration and festival/april-1st html# filter-dates).

The celebration begins at 31st December at midnight. People enjoy the moment with family and friends by drinking wine and singing New Year songs. Crackers are burn and fireworks are displayed at both public and private places. January first is the public holiday in France. People begin the New Year with some new resolutions and planned to spend the time with family members. Special New Year cakes decorated with the symbol of wishing good luck for the New Year are given to near and dear ones. Jour de l’an is a mid-winter festival. ‘There is a special tradition in Viella, a village in the Hautes-Pyrenees region close to the Spanish border. A church service is held late in the evening of New Year eve. Afterwards people walk to the vineyard in a torchlight procession. The grapes harvest begins at midnight. A strong sweet wine is made from grapes that have matured naturally on the vines. Bottles of this wine are specially marked to show that the grapes were harvested on January 1’ (http://www.timeanddate .com/holidays/france/new-year-day).

4.2 Epiphany (Fête de Rois)

Epiphany is one of a prime religious festival of France. The word ‘epiphany’ comes from the Greek word ‘epiphaneia’, means manifestation. In France, Epiphany is known as Fête des Rois or Twelve Night. It is also termed as The Adoration of Magi. Epiphany is commonly known as Three Kings’ Day, Feast of Epiphany or Theophany. It is one of the oldest Christian festivals celebrated on the 6th January, immediately after the culmination of Christmas season. Epiphany is celebrated after
the twelve days of Christmas and so it is also termed as Twelve Night. It marks the end of Christmas and beginning of the Carnival season which ends with the celebration of Mardi Gras. ‘Epiphany is one of the three principal and oldest festival days of the Christian church (including Easter and Christmas). In the western church; it commemorates the first manifestation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, represented by the Magi. In the Eastern Church, it commemorates the manifestation of his ‘divinity’ as it accrued at his Baptism in the Jordan River. In the evening preceding Epiphany is called Twelve Night’ (Donier, 1999:331).

An interesting story has narrated in Saint Mathew’s Gospel. Story goes like this; ‘God speak to the shepherds through an angel; to the Magi (wise men) the divine message communicated through astrology. The apparition of the bright star is according to the scriptures associated with the birth of a king of the Jews. The three Magi from East moved by their faith set out and followed the star. But when they approached Jerusalem the star had disappeared. Thus their faith was tested. Finally both the star and the Bible with mathematical precision led the Magi to Bethelhem and they found Jesus’ (Shilananda, 2006:255).

Epiphany is celebrated by the Christians around the world but with different tradition and terms. It is believed that Epiphany has been celebrated since the end of second century when even Christmas was not celebrated. Epiphany is a special time for the eviction of evils in many countries. In France, the inhabitants rush through the streets on the eve of Epiphany and make acrimonious clamors and a huge uproar with the object of scaring away ghosts and devils. The Galette des Rois or ‘cake of the king’ is an popular tradition of Epiphany. This custom is practiced in honor of three kings. In France, the custom of eating of cake has existed since 14th century.
Though the cake is eaten at Epiphany on 6th January, some people prefer to observe it earlier. Preparations of making cakes flinch one month before. Though different varieties of cakes are prepared for the festival, the cakes traditionally holds a feve, a dried bean. Whoever finds the bean inside the cake, he or she become the king or queen for the feast and can choose their partners for the feast.

4.3 Candlemass (Chandelur)

Candlemass is associated with the Virgin Mary’s purification, present of the baby Jesus and Jesus first admittance into the shrine. Candlemass is known as Chandelur or Jour des Crépes in France. It is an annual festival of France held on 2nd February. In Christianity, Jesus is believed as the light of world and so candle lit procession is customary on Candlemass. ‘The feast of the Purification of the Virgin or Presentation of Christ in the Temple was probably instituted by Pope Liberius at Rome in the fourth century. The ceremonial, to which it owes its popular name, Candlemass, is the blessing of candles in church and the procession of the faithful, carrying them lighted in their hands. Candlemass procession was not of spontaneous Christian growth, but was inspired by a desire to Christianize a Roman rite, the Amburbale, which took place at the same season and consisted of a procession round the city with lighted candles’ (Miles, 1912:162). It is also said that gala of Candlemass began in Jerusalem on fourth century and custom of lighting candle came on practice in fifth century. Jesus’s early life is mainly focused on Candlemass. ‘Christians believed that Jesus’s mother Mary presented him to God at the temple in Jerusalem after observing the traditional forty days period of purification (of mother) following his death. According to a New Testament Gospel,
a Jewish man named Simon hold the baby in his arms and said that he would be a light for the Gentile (Luke 2:32). It is for this reason that this event is called Candlemass' (http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/common/candlemass)

Plate1: Candlemass bells (source: www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk)

Candlemass can also be called as purificatory ceremony. After the birth of a child, the mother becomes impure for a certain period. The Christians, specially Roman Catholics, believe that after birth of Jesus, mother Mary remain unclean for 39 days and was purified on the 40th day. So, Candlemass is performed at 2nd February after the Christ birthday on 25th December. The Candles that blessed at the time of purification are believed to have amazing power. French people preserved those candles and lighted at the time of family junctures like christenings and interments and also at the time of blizzard or sickness. Early blooming snowdrops flowers (Galanthas nivalis) are known as Candlemass bells. Snowdrops are the emblems of hope for Christians. The Superstitious used to believe that snowdrops purify home but it should not brought into the house before Candlemass. Eating of cooked crêpes (thin pancakes made from wheat flour) by holding a coin in a hand is
a traditional practice of French people. They believe that it assured prosperity and glee until the following Candlemass celebration.

4.4 Lemon Festival (Fête du Citron)

Fête du Citron (Lemon festival) is an inimitable festival of France. This Lemon festival hosted by Menton, a little town situated at the Italian boarded. Fête du Citron held every year in the month of February with nine days duration. Menton is one of a major lemon producer of Europe. Since 1930, Menton was the top producer of lemon. Santa Theresa, Villafranca, Eureka are some of the varieties of lemon that grown in Menton. Fête du Citron has been organized in Menton since 1934. However, earlier it was just an exhibition but when it get the popularity, the municipality of the area gave permission to organize it as festival. Lemon festival is very unique festival. Here exclusive designs are made from the lemons and floats are decorated with lemons and some other fruits, which attract the tourists. Every year lakhs of people visit Menton to attend the Lemon festival. After Nice Carnival, Fête du Citron is the second largest event of French Riviera. The festival is run with a new theme every year. During the nine days of celebration, floral procession with sing and dance, Parade with floats (Corsos de Fruits d’or), Night Parade (Corsos Noctornes) etc. are organized. Exhibitions and local art and craft fair are also held. A traditional game called Moucouleti or Moccoletti has played at Menton during this Lemon festival. People hold small candles and keep them lit. They try to blow out other. ‘Young men were expected to use the utmost dexterity in putting out a young women’s candle, which held it well lit high over her head. Often, after having
succeeded in this feat, the young man could relight the charred wick and receive a kiss in return' (http://www.Fête-du-citron.com/lemon-festival-history/?lang=en).

Plate 2: An artist preparing a design from lemon
(source: archives.deccanchronicle.com)

4.5 Carnival of Nice

Carnival of Nice is one of the most popular winter festival of France organized on French Riviera Coastline. It is one of the biggest carnivals of the world annually held at the Nice, a city of the French Riviera. Nice Carnival is a two weeks festival begins at February-March and ends on the final day of Mardi Gras. Carnival of Nice initiated by Charles d’Anjou at 1924. First carnival parade was organized in 1830. In 1873, the carnival gets its present status. At the middle ages, people of Nice celebrated this Carnival to enjoyed rich and plentiful cuisine before lent (period of fasting). During Carnival, flower parade, parade with light, full carnivals are organized and yearly lakhs of people come Nice to attend this carnival. Parades takes place both day and night. Wearing of masks is an interesting tradition of this festival. The carnival runs with a new leitmotif every year. The King of Music is
chosen as the theme of the year. People celebrate this festival with great ecstasy and fun.

4.6 Kite Festival

Every year in the month of April, an international Kite festival has been organized in France. Berck-Sur-Mer is a small town situated in the Opal Coast of Northern France, is the host of this nine days festival. It is one of a prominent kite festival of the world. This festival is immensely popular among the local as well as out comers. Every year thousands of spectators visit Berck-Sur-Mer to colliery their skills and to enjoy the incredible display of colourful kites. People of all age participate in kite flying. The event is very much fascinating for the children. For their interest, special kites depicting the cartoons are also designed. Experts coming from different countries participate in the flying battles of Berck-Sur-Mer. Kites with different colours and designs represent cultures of countries. At the festival sites, small stalls are displayed, where varieties of kites are exhibited. Visitors can get information about the features of kites, and also the history or interesting story behind the kites. It is said that the tradition of kite flying was first introduced in China at 549AD.

4.7 Violet Festival (Fête des Violettes)

Violet Festival or Fête des Violettes is a spring time festival of Southern France. At the end of flower harvest in March, Violet festival is celebrated by the people of Tourrettes-Sur-Loup. People also celebrate Fête des Violette to welcome the season of spring. This festival has been celebrating since 1952. It is said that, this festival began by a Jeweler named Victor Linton. Violet is a deep violet coloured strong
In early days, there were different varieties of Violet were available and production of this flower was the focal agricultural activity of this region. But now, only victoria variety is cultivated. The flower and its leaves are use as ingredients in various food and beauty products. Ice cream, jam and a number of flavored candies are prepared from violet. On the other hand, it's strong fragrances used in perfume and cosmetics. Every year, after the completion of violet season, people of Tourrettes-Sur-Loup welcome the spring by celebrating Violet festival. On the day of festival, the Tourrettes-Sur-Loup becomes the city of Violet. Street sides are decorated with flowers. People come out to streets and participate in community dancing. Floral procession and flower battles are also organize where all aged group people participate and enjoyed the moment. Violet made products are also displayed for sale.

Plate 3: A scene of violate festival
(source: www.france-voyage.com/events/violet-festiva)
4.8 Good Friday

Good Friday is observed by Christian as a day of mourning in memory of Jesus crucifixion. It is the most solemn day for the Christians as Jesus was crucified by the Romans at outside the Jerusalem on this day. ‘The Good in Good Friday comes from old English where Good meant holy. So, Good Friday could be called Holy Friday (www.whyeaster.com). Good Friday is also known as Black Friday, Great Friday or Easter Friday. It is a day of grief, repentance and fasting. Special prayer services are hold by churches on Good Friday. On that day, bells are not rung on churches. It is believed that Jesus was died at 3 in the afternoon and in memory of that, special ceremony performed at churches. In some places procession are held where with the image of dead Christ, ceremonial burring takes place. Mourners usually come to the procession by wearing black dresses. Decorations of churches are totally avoided on this day. It is the day of mourning, sorrow and fasting. The orthodox Christians spend the day on fasting. In Catholic churches, the story of the crucifixion and death of Christ (Pass over) is also recited.

4.9 Easter (Pâque)

Easter or Easter Sunday (Le dimanche de Pâque) is celebrated by the Christians of France in commemoration of resurrection to Jesus Christ. It celebrates on the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox. Easter is the occasion of joy and rejoicing where church buildings are decorated with lights and special prayers are organized. ‘Easter is the principal festival of the Christian church year, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his crucifixion. The origin of Easter date to the beginning of Christianity and it is probably the oldest
Christian observance after the SABBATH (originally observed on Saturday, later on Sunday); the Sabbath subsequently came to be regarded as the weekly celebration of the resurrection. According to the Anglo-Saxon historians BEDE, the name Easter was then from the name of a Germanic Spring goddess Eoster, though evidence for such a deity is not otherwise known (Donier, 1999:308). As Jesus resurrection took place early in the morning, the sunrise service held in open air in some places. In the Easter morning, people gather in the open place and watch the sun rising. People with families come to church for Prayers and Bible reading. Parents sometimes bring their children for baptizing by the priest. For the occasion of Easter, special sweet dishes are prepared which are shared with relatives and friends. Easter cards are also send to near and dear ones. ‘Among Roman Catholics, the celebration of Easter Sunday starts with the Easter vigil the night before. In memory of the resurrection of Christ who is the ‘light of men’, there is first the festival of light. This consists in the blessing of the new fire and the blessing and lighting of the ‘Paschal Candle’, from which each one lights his. The Paschal Candle represents Christ and the Candle that the people in their hands represent the light they have received from him’ (Bezbaruah, 2003:91, Vol-V).

Easter is known as Pâque in France. The word comes from Latin word Pascua means food. As Easter is observed on Sunday it is also known as Easter Sunday. It is a festival of ecstasy and merriment. It marks the culmination of the fasting period of Lent. Although Easter is not celebrated in a particular time or date, it follows the lunar calendar and generally held on the 14th day of first lunar month. Easter is one of a most important spring time festival of France. There is a very strong ground to believe Easter as a Spring time festival and a festival of fertility. It is believed that,
the traditions of Easter have Pagan background. ‘Easter is named for a Saxon goddess Ostara or Eastre, a fertility goddess. Bringing in the end of winter with the days brighter and growing longer after the vernal equinox, Ostara had a passion for new life. The rabbit (well known for its propensity for rapid reproduction) was her sacred animal. Easter eggs and the Easter Bunny both featured in the Spring festival of Ostara, which were initially held during the feasts of goddess Ishtar. Eggs are an obvious symbols of fertility and the newborn chicks an adorable representation of new growth. Brightly colored eggs, chicks and bunnies were all used at festival time to express appreciation for Ostara’s gift of abundance’

(http://www.goddessgift.com/pandora%27s box/easter-history.html.).

Plate 4: Decorated Easter eggs (source-www.theguardian.com)

Exchanging decorated egg is widely prevalent tradition of Pâque. But eating egg before Easter means during Lent, eating of egg is forbidden. Easter celebration in France is slightly varies from that of the other countries. Though the rabbit known as Easter Bunny, symbolizes renewal, propagation and profusion of life, rabbits are replaced by Easter bells or flying bells (Clochê Volant) in France. As a deliberated
symbol of sorrow over the crucifixion of Christ, church forbade the ringing of bells from Good Friday to Easter Sunday. In France, chocolate is an indispensable cog of Easter celebration. Children are told that the churches bell are abscond to Vatican in Rome to collect the chocolate Easter egg which are then scattered in garden and yards on their return voyage. Parents pelt chocolate in garden and children search chocolates on the Easter Sunday morning. This is very fascinating custom of French Easter. Besides Easter bells, Easter hens and little Easter fish shaped chocolate are children's favorite item. Easter is an opportunity for families to come to gather. People enjoy delicious and traditional French food. Roasted legs of lamb with beans, potatoes are very popular Easter food. French legend said that eating of egg that had been laid on Good Friday protect people from ailment until the next Easter.

4.10 Mardi Gras or Shrove Tuesday

Mardi Gras is popularly known as Fat Tuesday, Shrove Tuesday or Pancake Day. In French Gras means 'fat'. The word 'shrove' comes from old English word 'shroven', means confession for doing any wrong and thanks giving to God. Time of Mardi Gras is flaccid because it never falls on a set day. But as it name indicates, the day is always Tuesday. Mardi Gras is the day immediately before Lent. During Lent, orthodox Christians keep them in fasting for a period of forty days. So before that, people using up all the fat foods specially eggs and milk by arranging feast or preparing special pancake. Preparing Pancake is culinary tradition of Mardi Gras and so the festival is also known as Pancake day. It is a festival of delight. Wearing mask is an integral and interesting feature of this festival. It is said that mask help to hide the class restrictions and feel free to mingling with the carnival party. 'The origin of Mardi
Gras can be traced to medieval Europe, passing through Rome and Venice in the 17th and 18th centuries to the French House of the Bourbons. From there, the traditional revelry of ‘Boeuf Gras’ or fatted calf followed France to her colonies. On March 2, 1699, French Canadian explorer Jean Baptise Le Moyne Sieur de Bienville arrived at a plot of ground 60 miles directly South of New Orleans and named it ‘Pointe du Mardi Gras’. Bienville also established ‘Fort Louis de la Louisiance’ in 1702. In 1703, the tiny settlement of Fort Louis de la Mobile celebrated America’s very first Mardi Gras’ (http://www.mardigrassneworleans.com/history.html). Mardi Gras is the festival of music, dance and amusement. People wear their colourful dresses and come out in street during the festival. As told by the tourist, purple, green and golden are the mostly used colour in Mardi Gras and these colours are symbol of Justice, faith and power.

**Plate 5: Two specially designed masks for using in Mardi Gras**
(source- www.destination360.com)
4.11 Lent

Lent is the forty days pre-Easter preparation period. Lent is observed in commemoration of Jesus’s forty days anguish in desert when Jesus was lured by Satan and he did not eat or drink for that long period. In commemoration of Jesus forty days suffering in the desert, the Christians observe this festival with great devotion and observing strict food restrictions and feast. Sundays and Saturdays are not included in Lent period. ‘In western churches it begins on Ash Wednesday, 6 weeks before Easter and provides for a forty days fast (Sundays are excluded) in imitation of Jesus Christ’s fasting in the wilderness. In eastern churches, it begins eight weeks before Easter (both Saturdays and Sundays are excluded as fast day)’ (Donier, 1999: 658). Lent is the retro of preparation for Easter, flinch on Ash Wednesday and ends on Easter eve. ‘During Lent, in Anglican churches, the alter of a church is covered with a cloth of purple colour. Purple is traditionally a royal colour and having purple cloth on the alter helps people to remember that Jesus is...
King and that He died at Easter. There are no flowers or any other decorations displayed in the Church' (www.whyeaster.com).

4.12 Holy Week

The last week of Lent is celebrated as Holy Week. It is a week before Easter Sunday or Easter day. Holy Week is also known as Great Week. Holly week instigate on Palm Sunday and ends on Eastern Sunday. ‘The name Holy week was used in the 4th century by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria and Epiphanius, bishop of Constantia. Originally only Friday and Saturday were observed as holy days; later Wednesday was added as the day on which Judas potted to betray Jesus and by the beginning of the third century the other days of the week had been added’(http://www.britanica.com/EBchecked). On this week, the Christians remember the last week events of Jesus Christ’s earthly life. During this week, special prayers and services are held on churches.

4.13 Palm Sunday

The first day of Holy Week is known as Palm Sunday. This day is celebrated by the Christian people in the memory of Jesus Christ triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem riding in a donkey. When Jesus entered the city, the people welcomed him with the branches of palm and Olivia tree and weaving these in the air. They put some of the branches on the road. On the way to Jerusalem, a number of children also accompanied Jesus and because of that, in some places the custom of procession of Christian children to church building is practice on this day. Participants of the procession bring the palm branches and sing hymns of praise. In
some places, such procession is not held. The church buildings are decorated with palm branches, where holy Bible reading and special Palm Sunday service are performed. Palm Sunday is also called as Passion Sunday.

### 4.14 Maunday Thursday

One of an important day of the Christians of France is Maunday Thursday. Thursday of Holy week is called Maunday Thursday. ‘Maunday’ is a Latin word and it means ‘command’. Accounts can be found in holy Bible that, on this day Jesus with his twelve followers had his last meal (last Supper) before his death. At the last Supper, Jesus and his followers eat roasted lambs, bread and drink red wine. Jesus symbolizes bread as his body and wine as blood and said that it will help his followers to remember him. ‘He washed the feet of each of the disciples, thus setting them an example in humanity and service, saying to them. ‘If I have washed your feet, I who am the master and the Lord, you in your turn ought to wash each other’s feet. He also gave them bread to eat and wine to drink, saying ‘Do this and remembrance of me’ thus instituting the sacrament of Lord’s Supper, which Christians still observe by taking bread and wine after offering special prayers’ (Bezbaruah, 2003:89, Vol-V).

### 4.15 May Day (Le Fête du Travail)

French celebrate May Day or Labor Day as La Fête du Travail or La Fête du Muguet. It is celebrated on the 1st of May every year in France. May Day is observed to give honor to workers right as well as an occasion to give lily or dog rose flowers to loved ones. The name Fête du Travail was formerly named as Fête
du Travail et de la Concorde Sociale (a day to celebrate work and social harmony) by Marechal Petian on 27th April, 1941. After World War II in 1947, the day was declared as a paid holiday for French employees. Now more than eighty countries of the world celebrate this day as a National holiday. In France, 1st May is also known as La Fête du Muguet. Lily of the valley or Dog rose flowers are symbols of good luck and so it is customary to exchange these flowers to each other in France. This tradition was supposed to begin from the time of King Charles IX of France when he was offered Lily of the valley flowers on 1st May 1561. King liked the gift and decided to present Lily of the valley flower to the ladies of his court on 1st May every year. ‘In the Language of flowers, the lily of the valley symbolizes ‘marital happiness’. It was, therefore, natural to link it to dating and popular dances known as ‘Bals du Muguet’ organized every year so that singles could meet their soul mate. The girls dressed in white and young men wore a spring lily on their lapel and parents and chaperones were banned from attending’

(http://pocketculture.com/2012/05/01 may-lst-labor-day and may-day-in France).

Plate 7: Lily of the valley of France
(source- www.frenchmoments.eu)
4.16 WWII Victory Day

The end of six years long Second World War and the end of Nazi oppression in France is celebrated as WWII Victory Day on 8th May every year. The day is the celebration of freedom of France from Adolf Hitler’s Nazi army. Victory Day is celebrated in France as Fête de la Victoire or Le jour de la libération. Second world war (1939-1945) last for a long time and it end when Germany unreservedly surrendered to allied forces after the demise of Hitler. The leader of the Free French forces Charles de Gaules announced about the official end of the war by ranging the church bells. So on the Victory Day, the church bells are ring at a particular time. In 1982, Victory Day was declared as the National holiday of France.

French people celebrate this festival with great ecstasy. Parades are organized and people participate by singing patriotic songs. National Flags of France are displayed in the Public buildings and at home. All the public and private organizations become close on Victory Day. Streets and road side areas of big cities, towns and war memorials become full of people to attend parade. Schools and colleges also close on Victory Day, but few days before the festival, students learnt the lessons about the Victory Day and the importance of the celebration. By doing this, institutions try to make new generation aware about the importance of this festival. Victory Day is a very big day for French people but it is celebrated in a grave mood. During the Second World War, lots of soldiers sacrificed their life for the fortification of their country. People go to church to attend special services in memory of the relatives, friends and also unknown soldiers who died in that war.
4.17 Pentecost or Le Pentecote

After the fifteenth day of Easter, Christians celebrate Pentecost. In accordance with Jesus' own promise, the Holy Spirit came to Jesus' followers as a sign of thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit. Christians observed Pentecost every year with hymns, prayers, and Holy Bible reading. 'Pentecost is the feast of the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is celebrated on a Sunday, fifty days after Easter' (Shilananda, 2006:71).

4.18 Ascension or l'Ascension

Ascension is celebrated on Thursday after the forty days of Easter. In France, the festival is known as l'Ascension, usually observed in the month of May. It is believed that till the forty days after resurrection, Jesus showed himself visible to his disciples and after forty days he ascended up to heaven with a promise to send his Holy Spirit to them. 'To remember this event, Christians celebrated Ascension. According to Shilananda, (2006:64), 'Ascension is a feast that can help men to look beyond the boundaries of space and time. Heaven is not an utopian dream, it is a reality. It is possible to believe in heaven while keeping one's feet firmly on the ground'. Ascension of Jesus celebrates the ascension of Jesus into heaven, where Christians believe he sits at the right hand of God and prays for the world. Ascension Day is a reminder to Christians that Jesus took his humanity into heaven. The festival marks the end of Jesus' post-resurrection appearance and is perhaps the earliest observed celebration.
4.19 Cannes International Film Festival (Le Festival International du Film de Cannes/ Festival de Cannes)

Cannes festival of France is one of the most prestigious film festivals of the world. The festival is annually held at the ‘Palais des Festivals et des Congress’ of France, usually at the month of May. Cannes festival was first set up as an international cinematographic festival in late 1930s. The festival became named as ‘Festival du film de Cannes’ at 1947. Films of sixteen countries were screened at that time. To avoid the clash with Venice film festival, Cannes festival was moved from autumn to spring season. The festival got the commercialism when the film market (marche du film) was founded at 1959. Cannes festival is an international podium and showcase for the European films. Annually, new films and documentaries of various languages are previewed and launched in this festival. The festival officially named as Festival de Cannes in 2002.

4.20 Mothers’ Day (Fête des Mères)

Mothers’ Day is one of the widely celebrated annual festivals of the world. In France, the festival is called Fête des Mères. The origin of this festival in France can be traced back to the era of Napoleon. In 1806, the emperor proposed to celebrate a special day for mothers of large families. After World War I, the city of Lyon celebrated mothers’ Day in honour of mothers and widows who lost their sons and husbands at War. In 1929, Mother’s Day was officially recognized and in 1941 the last Sunday of May month was chosen as the date of Mother’s Day. History says that mother worship was held at Greece at circa 6th century BCE. They celebrate Spring festival in honour of mother goddess Cybele. Romans also observed mother worship for
Juno Lucina, goddess of fertility. Now on the Mothers’ Day, children give gift to their mother with love and tenderness. They prepare traditional foods, specially decorated cakes and spend the whole day with their mothers and try to make their mom happy.

4.21 Music Festival (Fête de la Musique)

Fête de la Musique is one of a most popular musical festival of France. Every year on 21st June, the street of France awash with the sound of music. Joel Cohen an American musician first recommended celebrating this musical festival on the longest day of summer solstice. The festival was held for the first time in 1982. Along with France, more than one hundred cities of Germany, Australia, Switzerland, United Kingdom etc. adopted this festival. Now the festivity is also known as world music day. Though the rhythms of music refresh every nook and corner of the country, Paris become the centre of attraction for the visitors and tourist. Local and well-known artists present their performance through open air consorts. People come out from their homes and take part in street parades by singing and dancing. Though this musical performance is quite a new festival, people adopt this by their hearts. The nature of suppleness of the festival provides space to everybody to participate and enjoy the festival.

4.22 Bastille Day (La Fête National)

Bastille Day is the French National holiday celebrated every year on 14th July. Bastille was a prison which was built to defend the Paris against the English in fourteenth century. It marks the expiration of outright monarchy and natal of the
sovereign nation and ultimately the creation of the first Republic. The incident marked the commencement of French revolution which leads the foundation of Republic in France. In commemoration of storming of Bastille fortress every year on 14th July, Bastille Day is celebrated by the whole country with great fervour. On 6th July 1880, Bastille Day was declared as National holiday of France by the recommendation of a man named Benjamin Raspail. Bastille Day is a great festivity of French people. It is a gala of liberty, equality and freedom. Bastille Day is celebrated as La Fête national. It is almost similar like the Independence day of other countries. People enjoy the day of their freedom. On the day, military and civilian parades are held on the streets of Paris and other parts of the country. Through large scale of public events like musical performance, communal meal, dance people express their happiness and dell to country. Fireworks are also organized on the night of Bastille.

4.23 Cannes International Fireworks festival (Festival of Cannes Pyrotechnic Art)

It is one of a popular firework festival of France. To every genre of Pyro musical shows, this festival is organized at the La Napole Gulf of Cannes. Every year during the July-August month, Cannes Pyrothchnic Art festival is celebrated for six nights. It is one kind of firework competition of Pyrotechnic art which has been observing since 1967. In this competition group of expert in any particular art, show their talent and use sky as canvas. It is a twenty five minute show where each group of artist exhibits their choreography in colourful fireworks and with proper music. Competitions are generally held at night. The best performer of the competition
declared as winner and awarded with prizes. Cannes International Fireworks festival is a very famous and every year lakhs of people visit Napoule Gulf as the spectator of this show.

**4.24 Carrot Festival (Fête de la Carotte)**

The Creances town of Normandy in France celebrates Carrot festival at second Saturday in August every year. Carrot festival of Creances town of Normandy in France is not a very old and it has been celebrating since 1990. It is a very fascinating and unique festival which is being celebrated by the people of the region with pomp and gaiety. Creances is popular for its agricultural products specially vegetables. The town is known for the finest varieties of carrot. In French market, Creances is the leading exporter of carrot. So, town folk of Creances celebrate Carrot festival which is dedicated to its empress of vegetables carrot. On the second Saturday of August every year, Carrot festival is observed with its customary tradition. Ceremony begins with the welcoming speeches of several dignitaries. Early festive morning, elders of the town amass with the carrot uniform means red coat and green cap. They are accompanied by some laborer dressed people. They ware hoary fashioned working rags and carry various farming implements. Then all of them sing the town song and take part in street parade where leading person carries the finest varieties of carrot. Visitors participate in the festival with carrot outfit. Children like this festival very much. Different designs are prepared by carrot and professional carrot growers come to show their best varieties of carrot.
4.25 Assumption Day (L’Assomption)

Assumption Day is a National festival of France. The day is celebrated annually on 15th August in commemoration of Virgin Mary’s departure from earthy life and assumption into heaven. Assumption Day is formally known as L’Assomption or Assumption of the Virgin Mary in France. 15th August was introduced as a National day of Procession by King Louis XIII in 1638. In honor of Mary, the first procession was organized at Notre Dam of Paris and Blessed Virgin Mary became the core Patron Saint of Franc Assumption Day is very important for Catholic Christians. Churches hold special services and celebration on the occasion of Assumption Day and they visit church to attend those program. Government and non-government offices, institutes, organizations remain close on Assumption Day. Small towns, villages run the festival in their own way. Traditional sports events, plays, communal meal are taken and parades are held. The day is enjoyed together with the family members and friends. Special Assumption celebration held at a
small village Lourdes located near the Spanish border. It is a sacred place for Christian pilgrimage and millions of people visit Lourdes every year to attend special Assumption program. Legend says that a fourteen years old girl named Bernadite in 1858 claimed to saw a beautiful lady in cave near Lourdes. The lady was believed to be the Virgin Mary. People believe that drinking of spring water from that particular cave cure diseases.

4.26 Water Jousting Festival (Joutes Nautiques)

Water Jousting or Marine Jousting is a popular Summer time water festival of France. It is a local festival of sailors or waterman. From the month of August to September every year, Water Jousting is celebrated throughout the France. It is said that, Water Jousting festival was introduced by Greek and from them Latin adopted it. But after Roman, this festival has been practicing since seventeenth century. During nineteenth century, Jousting was begin to practice by sailors who came together to bring respite to resident during the repeated inundation of Rhône. They adopted it as their festival and continuing Jousting tradition from generation to generation. In 1901, Federal union of French Societies of Swimming and Rescue hold the first Jousting championship. But it was not officially recognized as a sport by government until 1960. Though Water Jousting festival is practiced in different parts of the regions with their own method and rules, the Sete water Jousting festival is a special attraction of tourists.
4.27 International Garden Festival (Le Festival International des Jardins)

International Garden Festival of Chaumont of Loire valley in France is another popular festival of France. To provide exceptional prospect of flower designing, flower arrangement, new ideas and approach of flower gardening, this festival has been celebrated since 1992. International Garden festival is organized for six to seven months and opens for spectators from April to October month. Every year this festival is celebrated with a new theme. It is a festival of flower where different varieties of flowers, flower designing are exhibited. Exhibitors are selected from all over the world. Besides general public, landscape gardeners, draftsman and gardeners of all over the world visit France to be a part of International Garden Festival.

4.28 Chocolate Festival (Salon du Chocolat)

Chocolate festival is the trade fair for the international chocolate industries. In France, this festival is held at Paris with five days duration usually at the end of October. Celebration of this festival begun in 1994. This concept was first initiated by Sylvie Douce and Francois Jeantet to provide a link between the coco-producing countries and chocolate consumers. Besides Paris, Chocolate festival also held at New York, Beijing and Shanghai. It is a festival of chocolate lovers where varieties of chocolate are displayed for tasting. It is a inimitable opportunity to find out and palate chocolate that are not found anywhere else. All over the world, chocolate experts visit Paris to join this unique festival. During the festival workshop and
competition of chocolate making, chocolate fashion shows displaying different
designs of chocolate are organized. Children love chocolate festival very much.

4.29 All Saints’ Day (La Toussaint)

All Saints’ Day is dedicated to the honor of deceased family member and all
Saints’. French equivalent of All Saints’ Day is La Toussaint. It is an Autumn time
festival celebrated on the 1st November every year. ‘The personal relations which we
enjoy in the life are extended beyond the grave through Faith in Christ. All those
who in this life excelled in the following of Jesus have been declared by the church
under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to have reached heaven and are venerated as
Saints’ (Shilananda, 2006:198-199). La Toussaint is very important for French
people. They commemorate their deceased relatives by offering flowers on the
tombs and light candle there. Put of Chrysanthemums flowers or garlands of
artificial flowers on or near to graves is a tradition of All Saints’ Day. It is a very
important festival of France but the country remains quite on this day. People visit
churches to attend special services. In honor of deceased, people spend the whole
day of Toussaint peacefully. They avoid family fight which provides an opportunity
to strengthen the family bond and express the common grief. The whole family
gathers at cemetery. Offering chrysanthemums flower is a tradition of this festival.
People put the flowers on grave in memory of deceased and it was used to replace
candles. It is the symbol of love and unity of Catholic church. At the time of All
Saints day, street sides are decorated with flowers.
The day commemorating all the Saints of the Christian church, both known and unknown celebrates on November 1st in the Western churches and on the first Sunday after Pentecost in the Eastern churches. Its origin cannot be traced with certainty and it has been observed on various days in different places. ‘The first evidence for the November 1st date of celebration and of the broadening of the festival to include all Saints as well as all martyrs occurred during the reign of Pope Gregory III (731-741) who dedicated a chapel in St.Peter’s Rome, on November 1st in honor of all Saints. In 800, All Saints day was kept by Alcuin on November 1st and it was appeared in a 9th century calendar. On that day, in 837 Pope Gregory IV ordered its general observance. In medieval England, the festival was known as Hallows and its eve is still known as Halloween, which has become a secular holiday in its own right in the United States’ (Wendy (ed.), 1999: 34-35).

4.30 Armistice Day (L’Armistice)

Armistice Day is another national festival of France. Every year on 11th November, people of France celebrate Armistice Day in remembrance of end of First World War. It is a solemn occasion to pay respect and honor to the people who fought and died in First World War. ‘Armistice Day is commemorated every year on 11th November to mark the armistice signed between the Allies of World War I and Germany at Compiegne. France for the cessation of hostilities on the western Front of World War I, which took effect at eleven o’clock in the morning. The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918’ (http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/france/armistice-day). At 11 o’clock in the morning of the Armistice Day, the country becomes silent for few minutes to pay
tribute to the brave solders of Second World War. Special functions and celebrations are held at battlefield and memory ground. People ware black or dark cloth on the Armistice day. Solders dressed in formal military outfit. Buds, circlets and garlands are offered to the status and memorials of the solders. In France red poppies are the symbol of veterans of wars. On the Armistice Day, red poppies offered on the grave sites of the veterans. On this day, the French families spend time together. 11th November was declared as the National holiday of France in 1922. Besides France, Armistice day is also observed by some other countries but with different terms and rituals. Armistice Day is also known as Remembrance Day, All Veterans Day, etc.

4.31 Festival of Light (Fête des Lumières)

Festival of Light is one of an awaited festival of France. Every year on 8th December, Festival of Light is celebrated by French people to express thankfulness towards Virgin Mary. In France, Lyon is famous for Fête des Lumières. It is a four days event. On the occasion of this festival, special light shows and procession are held. Windows of houses impulsively lit up with candles to produce special effects throughout the streets. People sing songs until midnight and cried ‘Vive Mary’. It is an important festival for the people of Lyon and so they keep Lumignons, a collection of blemished or clear glass to burn the taper on windowsill on festival day. It is said that, the festival originally celebrated to pay homage to Mary when Lyon collide with plague in 1643. To secure the city, people make a motorcade to Basilica of Fourvier to light tapers and give offering in the name of Mary. 'In 1852, it becomes a popular festival when a statue of Virgin Mary was erected next to the
Basilica, overlooking the city. Leading up to the inauguration, everything was in place for the festivities. The prominent Catholics of the time suggested lighting up the facades of their homes as was traditionally done for major events such as royal processions and military victories’ (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Festival_of_Lights%28Lyon%29).

4.32 Christmas (Noël)

‘The word ‘Christmas’ originated as a compound meaning Christ’s mass’. It comes from the English ‘christes maesse’ and middle English ‘christe masse’ originally, derived from Greek ‘christos’ that means ‘the anointed one’ which is a title of Jesus, and the suffix ‘masse’ from Latin ‘missa’ that means festival or feast day or mass. Christmas is also known as ‘Xmas’ in which the Greek letter x (pronounced as Khi) is used as an observation for Christos. Therefore Christmas is built on the name of Christ and a festival or celebration or mass in his honor’ (The Assam Tribune (Horizon), 2010:3)

Advent is the pre-Christmas period, probably 30th November to 24th December, one month before the Christmas. It marks the beginning of church year for Christians. ‘Advent’ means ‘coming’ in Latin. There are three meaning of ‘coming’ that Christians describe in Advent. The first and most taught of happened about 2000 years ago when Jesus came into the world as a baby to live as a man and die for us. The second can happen now as Jesus wants to come into our lives now. And the third will happen in the future when Jesus comes back to the world as king and judge not a baby’ (www. whyeaster.com). Nevertheless, advent is the pre-Christmas period; variations are seen in adherences due to denominational uniqueness. Advent
is celebrates with forty days duration by Eastern and orthodox churches and the gala is called nativity fast. On the other hand, for western churches, Advent comprises four successive Sundays, nearest to November 30 and ending on Christmas Eve. Advent is also known as the ‘incarnation’. However, fasting is normally not observed in advent, the orthodox Christians stay away from taking some items like meat, fish, wine etc. at the time of fasting. Besides lighting Advent candle, display Advent wreaths, Advent calendar made of cardboard or paper with several window doors regarded very popular observance of Advent. The calendar is very fascinating specially for kids. Earlier under every window or door of calendar, pictures related to Christmas stories were underneath. At present, the theme of the calendar are either cultural or from sports. Some calendars even have chocolate or toys for children. One window or doors open in everyday of December till Christmas. Purple and blue are the royal colours used in most of advent services.

Christmas festival is lasts for twelve days, from 26th December to 6th January. Each day is known by different names. In France Christmas is known as Nöel. Twelve days of Christmas are - Boxing Day or St. Stephen’s Day, Mother Night or St. John’s Day, Holy Innocent’s Day or Childremas, Feast of Fools, Bringing on the Boar, New year’s Eve or Hogmany, The Kalendas of Journey, 8th day of Christmas, 9th day of Christmas, 10th day of Christmas, Eve of Epiphany or festival of the three kings and Epiphany. Though the celebration of Christmas lasts for 12 days, the actual celebration held on 25th December. Traditionally, it is a time of great rejoicing for the Christians; wearing new cloths, decoration of house, preparing special dishes are some important aspects of this festival. Christmas feasts are generally held at homes of each family, but in some places, specially in the rural areas, community feast are
also organize. Exchanging of gifts and good wishes are also important feature of Christmas. Singing carol is common practice of both Catholic and Protestants. On the Christmas day, churches are being decorated with lights and flowers, where people offer their prayer. Holy Bible reading is also an important practice of Christmas. ‘Every Catholic home also puts up a cribe inside the house and an illuminated star in a prominent place outside. The cribe represents the sense of Nativity or the birth of Christ; the child Jesus lying in a manger, between his mother and Joseph; and an angel from heaven appearing to the shepherds and hosts of angles singing the Christmas message to the world – ‘Glory to God, in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will’ (Bezbaruah, 2003:87-88, Vol-V). Singing carol, dances, decoration of house with Christmas trees, arrival Santa Clause i.e., an old man with white beard, dressed in a red cloth and hat, who is supposed to go round the world at Christmas time, bringing gifts for children, construction of cribe are some popular custom of Christmas (For details see chapter v).

Besides the above mentioned festivals, Mid Summer’s Day (La Saint-Jean), St Valentine’s Day (La Saint Valentin), Avignon Festival, April Fool (Le Poisson d’avril ) are some of the important festivals of France. Avignon Festival is one of an oldest and well-known cultural festival of France. Every year in July, the festival is celebrated in a city of Southern France named Avignon. Avignon festival was founded by a man named Jean Vilar in 1947. On the other hand, almost all the countries of the world spend 1st April as a day of shenanigans and practical jock. In France, 1st April is celebrated as le Poisson d’avril. It is a day of delight for children. On Poisson d’avril, children stick the paper fish on the back of adults and
run away shrieking ‘Poisson d’avril’, means ‘April fish’. This is a very old and popular festival of France celebrated during the season of Easter.

**Case 4.1**

> Mr Philippe Ramirez of France, aged 58 years, is an anthropologist and originally was Spanish. Mr Ramirez frequently visits for academic purpose and so he is familiar with Assamese culture. He can speak and understand Assamese language. His family came from Spain to Algeria where there was a French colony and settled there. Now he is a citizen of Paris in France. He was baptized at the time of his birth. He is Agnostic by religion although he does not believe in religion. He does not celebrate Christian festivals except Christmas because he believe that, Christmas brings hope for people that somebody will come and save the world from the hand of evil powers and bring peace and happiness. Mr Ramirez likes to celebrate the republican festivals like Bastille Day, Victory Day, Armistice Day, etc. He told that New Years Day, Christmas, Easter, Victory Day, Bastille Day etc. are mostly celebrated festivals in France. Easter is one of the largely celebrated Spring time festivals of that country. Resurrection of Jesus is a symbol of arriving Spring. All vegetation and flowers sleep in Winter and blooming during the Spring. Like that, Jesus gets life after three days of His death. He told that, religion is now become less important for the French people. Churches become empty because eighty per cent of the people do not go the Church. For them festival is a time of enjoyment, exchange of gift and vacation to spend with the family members and friends. No fertility cult or Sun worship is prevalent in the society of French.
France especially Paris, is becoming the land of assimilation of different cultures. Festivals of all the religious community like Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, etc. are celebrated by the Parisians with great pomp and gaiety. According to Mr Philippe, a number of Tamil people from Sri Lanka live at Paris and they celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi festival observing with all rites and rituals. Chinese New Year festival is also a popular festival among French people. Mr Ramirez told that he usually does not like to go to the crowded and shout loudly to express happiness. For him, there is no fixed time of celebration and everybody should celebrate every moments of life.

**Case 4.2**

Mr. Couderc Fredric of Nantes in France, aged 44 years, is a musician. His father is a Catholic and mother is a Protestant, but he does not believe in any religion. According to Mr Fredric, though religion is not so important for French people, most of the festivals of France have religious flavor. A good number of the people of France, especially the youngsters, do not know about the religious background of the festivals. Music Festival held every year on 21st June is his favorite festival. He said that, almost all the families of France are nuclear families, although earlier, concept of joint family was the ideal concept of family. According to him, one of the reasons of this change is that about fifty years back people manually practice their agricultural activities and because of that they needs more man power. But after Second World War, agricultural works are conducted by machines minimizing the human labour. Now only the financially weak have joint family tradition. This concept of family affected on the celebration of festivals also. Mr. Fredric said that, at his childhood, he celebrated festivals
specially Christmas, in a large family consisting of grandmother, grandfather, uncle, aunt and good number of family members. But now celebration is limited to four-five family members. He does not performs any special rites for Christmas. For him, Christmas is an occasion of consumption of lots of food, drink, exchanging gift etc. There is no traditional belief or fertility cult related to Christmas. Christmas, Epiphany, New Years Day, Easter and Mardi Gras are five mostly celebrated festival of France.

**Casae 4.3**

> Miss Lancon Ganzales Anne of Menton in France, aged 35 years is a teacher of a school. She is a Christian Catholic by religion. She belongs to an orthodox Christian family and her grandfather was a priest in a local church. Miss Lancon visits church regularly and participate in community prayer. Christmas is her favorite festival. Locally celebrated Lemon festival is also one of her favorite festival. During Christmas, she takes part in mid night prayer, where she participate in Bible reading along with her family members. On the Christmas day, whole of her family takes meal with thirteen specially prepared deserts. They also sing Christmas songs which are integrally related to different events of the life of Jesus like waiting for delivery of Virgin Marry, arrival of Jesus on earth, etc. In her place, it is told by parents to their children that Santa Clause will come through chemni and put gifts for them under the Christmas tree. She said green, gold and silver are the mostly used colours of Christmas. To ward off the evil spirits, they put knot on each corner of table. They also hang mistletoe at the entrance of house. Ms Ganzeles was fascinated by the living Vaishnavite tradition.
gathered through internet. To fulfill her keen desire to visit Majuli, the epitome of the Vaishnavite culture of Assam, she came to this remote part of India.

Case 4.4

Mr Almen Daos of Normandy of France, aged 61 years, is a government employee. He was born at Morocco in North Africa and now live in Rouen town of Normandy. He is Atheists in religion. His Christian name is Gern Maarir. Now he does not follow any religion. He said, France is one of an oldest country which practiced Christian religion and most of the festivals are religious in nature. France is very flexible in religious matter and persons from different religion in France have the right to celebrate their festivals. Labour Day, Bastille Day, Victory Day, Music festival are, etc. some of the popular festivals of that country. Besides these, some traditional festivals are also celebrated in different regions of France. He loves Music festival. A cultural minister created this festival and since 1981, Music Festival is celebrated by French people on 21st June every year with pomp and gaiety. After that many countries began to celebrate this festival in their own style. Music Festival is celebrated not only in big cities but also in small towns and villages. That day is the longest summer day. The festival begins at about 5 o’clock in evening and continued till the next day. Everybody comes out to the streets and take part in musical concerts. All kind of music like folk, classical, jazz, rock, etc. are performed there. Christmas is another famous festival of France. He said, thirteen deserts taken in Christmas represents thirteen disciples of Jesus.
Case study 4.5

Mr. Danial Ploteau (70 years) and Sally Ploteau (65 years) are husband wife live in Rouen town of Normandy in France. Mr. Danial Ploteau is originally Catholic Christian and his wife is a Protestant (Angilican) Christian. At present they do not believe in any religion. They have two children. Mrs Ploteau is a school teacher and her husband is a retired service man. Mrs. Salley Ploteu’s grandfather was an Angilican priest. But her father never went to church. The couple said that, in France religious believes are become flaccid and because of that rites and rituals associated to festivals are now not known by the people of the country. In Christmas also only a few people prefer to go to Church to take part in community prayer. Festivals become holidays and family reunion there. They said that now a day, cultural festival likes Music, Dance and Theatre festivals are more famous then religious festivals. They also participate in festivals specially musical festival organized by the people of other countries. Ganapati festival, Chinese New Year festival, etc. are also their favorite festivals.

Case 4.6

Mr. Roger Lazano (72 years) and Lileane Lazano (67 years) is a couple live in Paris of France. They came to Assam to see the natural beauty, tea gardens, one horned rhino, etc. of Assam. For them festival is only an occasion for the gathering of family members. They celebrate Christmas with utmost joy and merriment. They have three children who come from their workplace during the occasion of Christmas. Roasted goose or turkey, pudding, chest nuts, fruits and dry fruits, foie gras (fat liver) are some traditional food items served during Christmas. They also prepare special cakes for Christmas. Labor Day, Easter, Bastille Day, Victory Day, All Saints Day, etc. are some of the popular
festivals of France. People live at countryside principally practiced agricultural activities and they perform some harvest festivals like Wine Festival, Grape Festival, etc. According to Mr. and Mrs. Lazano, due to the commercialization of festivals, most of the festivals in France lost their traditional flavor.
References


Internet Sources

http://www.france.fr/en/celebration and festival/april-1st.html#filter-dates

http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/france/new-year-day

http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/common/candlemass


www.whyeaster.com

http://www.britanica.com/EBchecked


http://pocketculture.com/2012/05/01 may-1st-labor-day and may-day-in France).

http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/france/arnistice-day