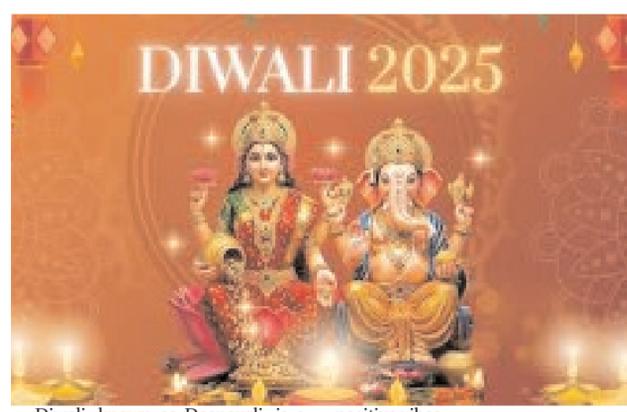


Diwali is a festival of light, What does light symbolize for you?



Diwali, known as Deepavali, is a widely celebrated festival in India that brings joy and brightness to people's lives. Lasting for five days, each day has its own unique customs and traditions. Diwali signifies the victory of good over evil and light over darkness. Lets explore the detailed Article on Diwali Celebration and ways to celebrate this auspicious occasion with our loved ones.

Diwali, also known as the Festival of Lights, is a joyous celebration in India where families and friends unite for five days of festivities. This special occasion signifies the triumph of light over darkness and the victory of good over evil.

During Diwali, homes come alive with vibrant decorations like colorful lights, candles, and rangoli patterns made from powders. Families thoroughly clean their houses, symbolising the welcoming of good luck and

positive vibes.

Diwali holds stories of Lord Rama and Goddess Lakshmi, which people recall and celebrate. Fireworks light up the night sky during this festival, emphasising the power of light over darkness.

The tradition of exchanging gifts and sweets adds a delightful touch to Diwali, symbolising care and celebration. The festival also promotes forgiveness and new beginnings.

While fireworks have been a traditional aspect of Diwali, there is a growing awareness of celebrating it in an eco-friendly way to protect the environment. At its core, Diwali is a time for happiness, togetherness, and sharing joy and goodness among loved ones.

The Five Days of Diwali

Diwali unfolds over five distinctive days, each with its importance. Dhanteras marks the beginning,

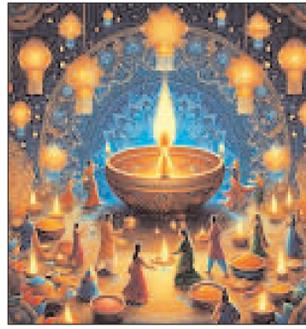
where people buy gold or silver for good fortune. Choti Diwali commemorates the triumph of light, accompanied by early oil baths. Diwali itself, the main day, witnesses homes adorned with lamps, symbolising the victory of good over evil. Govardhan Puja recalls Lord Krishna's protective act, while Bhai Dooj strengthens the bond between siblings on the fifth day. These days contribute unique elements to the joyful celebration of Diwali, creating a festive atmosphere filled with tradition, spirituality, and togetherness.

Dhanteras

Dhanteras is a significant Hindu festival marking the beginning of Diwali celebrations. It revolves around inviting prosperity into our lives. Celebrated on the thirteenth day of the Kartik month, it's named "Dhanteras" because "Dhan" signifies wealth, and "Teras" refers to the thirteenth day.

During Dhanteras, people often buy gold, silver, or precious items, believing it bring good fortune and financial well-being for the year. Homes are adorned with rangoli, and lamps are lit to welcome Goddess Lakshmi, the deity of wealth. Special prayers seek her blessings for abundance.

Dhanteras emphasises more than material acquisitions; it encourages families to unite, clean and embellish homes, and share the happiness of new possessions. The festival teaches the significance of wealth in our lives and promotes gratitude and generosity. Dhanteras sets a positive and festive atmosphere, setting the stage for the joyful Diwali celebrations.



Naraka Chaturdashi (Choti Diwali)

Naraka Chaturdashi, also known as Choti Diwali, is a crucial day in the Diwali festival. It occurs on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight in the Hindu month of Kartik, holding its own special significance. The term "Naraka Chaturdashi" originates in the tale of Lord Krishna's conquest over the formidable demon Narakasura.

Legend has it that Narakasura had captured numerous heavenly beings, prompting Lord Krishna to engage in a courageous battle to liberate them and vanquish the demon. This day symbolises the victory of good over evil and light over darkness.

During Choti Diwali, individuals participate in traditional oil baths before sunrise, symbolising the removal of impurities for physical and spiritual well-being. In certain regions, a symbolic mixture representing the demon is created and later smashed, depicting the eradication of evil

forces.

Diwali (Main Day)

Diwali, the main day of the festival, is an incredibly special occasion filled with lights, joy, and cultural festivities. It typically falls on the night of the new moon in the Hindu month Kartik, signifying the victory of good over evil and the dispelling of darkness.

Homes come alive with the warm glow of diyas (oil lamps), candles, and vibrant decorations. Families diligently clean their homes and create beautiful rangoli patterns at the entrances. The anticipation builds as people prepare for special prayers and pujas, seeking blessings from Goddess Lakshmi, the deity associated with wealth and prosperity.

The exchange of gifts and sweets is a cherished tradition during Diwali, fostering a sense of togetherness and happiness. Fireworks illuminate the night sky, symbolising the triumph of light over darkness. Delicious feasts are prepared, and families gather to share in the festive spirit. Diwali is a time for reflection, forgiveness, and new beginnings, emphasising the values of unity, generosity, and the triumph of goodness. The celebration brings diverse communities together, creating a tapestry of lights that symbolises the essence and spirit of Diwali in a unique and joyous way.

Govardhan Puja

Govardhan Puja, also known as Annakut or Padwa, is a special festival observed on the fourth day of Diwali. It commemorates the tale of Lord Krishna lifting the Govardhan Hill to shield villagers from heavy rains caused by Lord Indra's wrath.

During this celebration, people

craft small hills from cow dung and decorate them with flowers and food, symbolising the Govardhan Hill. This ritual is a tribute to Lord Krishna's compassionate act and serves as a reminder of nature's protective role. Devotees pray, expressing gratitude for the blessings of nature and acknowledging the interconnectedness of humanity and the environment. Various food items are offered as a gesture of devotion. Govardhan Puja underscores the values of environmental conservation, respect for nature, and the importance of safeguarding communities. It is a festival that encourages a sense of responsibility and reverence for the gifts bestowed by nature, fostering a deeper understanding of our connection with the environment.

Bhai Dooj

Bhai Dooj, celebrated on the fifth day of Diwali, is a wonderful Hindu festival that pays tribute to the special relationship between brothers and sisters. Sisters express affection by performing aarti for their brothers, applying a red tilak on their foreheads, and offering prayers for their happiness and protection. In return, brothers exchange gifts and make a commitment to support and care for their sisters. This occasion is a heart-felt celebration of the strong bond shared among siblings and the love that unites them. Bhai Dooj finds its roots in the story of Lord Krishna visiting his sister Subhadra following his victory over the demon Narakasura. Beyond religious distinctions, the festival underscores the enduring connection and affection between brothers and sisters.

A Guide to Religious Observances for Diwali



Why is Diwali called the Festival of Lights?

Why is Diwali called the Festival of Lights? Learn about the meaning of the name Diwali and the significance of the festival in various religious traditions.

Observances of Diwali differ depending on region and tradition. Among Hindus the most widespread custom is the lighting of diyas (small earthenware lamps filled with oil) on the night of the new moon to invite the presence of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. In Bengal the goddess Kali is worshipped. In North India the festival also celebrates the royal homecoming of Rama (along with Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman) to the city of Ayodhya after defeating Ravana, the 10-headed king of the demons, thus connecting the festival with the holiday of Dussehra. In South India the festival marks Krishna's defeat of the demon Narakasura. Some celebrate Diwali as a commemoration of the marriage of Lakshmi

and Vishnu, while others observe it as the birthday of Lakshmi.

Rangoli for Diwali

Rangoli for Diwali Lines and lamps joining together in a rangoli for Diwali, the festival of lights. During the festival, diyas are lit and placed in rows along the parapets of temples and houses and set adrift on rivers and streams. Homes are decorated, and floors inside and out are covered with rangolis, consisting of elaborate designs made of colored rice, sand, or flower petals. The doors and windows of houses are kept open in the hope that Lakshmi will find her way inside and bless the residents with wealth and success.

A woman and her daughter smear color powder on one another's face on Holi, the Indian festival of colors.

The names and events of the individual days of Diwali are as follows:

The first day, known as Dhanteras, is dedicated to cleaning homes and purchasing



small items of gold. Lakshmi is the focus of worship on that day. The second day, called Naraka Chaturdashi or Choti Diwali, commemorates Krishna's destruction of Narakasura; prayers are also offered for the souls of ancestors. On the third day, Lakshmi Puja, families seek blessings from Lakshmi to ensure their prosperity; light diyas, candles,

and fireworks; and visit temples. It is the main day of the Diwali festival. The fourth day, known as Govardhan Puja, Bali Pratipada, or Annakut, commemorating Krishna's feat of lifting up a mountain, Govardhan Hill, to protect the local cowherds in defiance of Indra, the king of the gods, who had sent a torrential rain upon them. It is also the first day of Kartika (Hindu) calendar. Merchants perform religious ceremonies and open new account books. The fifth day, called Bhai Dooj, Bhai Tika, or Bhai Bij, celebrates the bond between brothers and sisters. On that day sisters pray for the success and well-being of their brothers, similar to the holiday Raksha Bandhan.

Diwali is generally a time for visiting, exchanging gifts, wearing new clothes, feasting, feeding the poor, and setting off fireworks (though such displays have been restricted to limit noise and other environmental pollution).

The right number of diyas you should light on Diwali, Choti Diwali and Dhanteras



How Many Diyas to Light on Diwali, Choti Diwali, and Dhanteras?

1. Dhanteras

It is customary to light 13 diyas on Dhanteras, placing some in the nearest temple and others in different parts of the house to ward off evil spirits and energies, to ensure that nothing dims the colour of Diwali and to ensure the safety of each family member. According to popular belief, these thirteen lamps are dedicated to Lord Kubera, who is considered the owner of wealth, valuables and splendour. Place these diyas in different parts of the house, such as the puja room, the kitchen and the entrance. Each diya has a unique meaning. A diya at the door, for example, represents prosperity and welcoming visitors to the house. A diya in the kitchen is a sign of abundant food and well-being. In addition, a diya in the puja room represents worshipping God and seeking blessings.

2. Choti Diwali

On Choti Diwali, also known as Kali Chaudas, it is considered auspicious to light 14 diyas. The diyas should be placed around the plate and the central one should have four faces. Now add sugar to the 11 diyas; alternatively, you can add makhana, kheer or murmura. Lighting the four-faced diya first, before the other 11 diyas, is an important next step. On Choti Deepavali, lighting diyas in different places has special significance. To symbolise their wish for a sweet and prosperous life, some people also add sugar or other sweets to the diyas.

3. Diwali or Deepavali

On Badi Diwali, also known as Lakshmi Puja, it is customary to light many diyas throughout the house and garden. This symbolises the wish for a bright and prosperous future. According to Hindu mythology, those who light thirteen diyas during Diwali and Dhanteras will be blessed with good health and prosperity. However, lighting a significant number of diyas is considered auspicious, so there is no limit and you can illuminate your home with as many lamps, lights and diyas as you wish to welcome Goddess Lakshmi. People also light diyas in their cars and on their balconies to spread the cheer of Diwali with others.

Spreading the Lights of Happiness



It's a Festival that illuminates the Earth as well as the Skies and brings joy around on this world. It is a festival when the whole of India transcends into a land of myriad lamps. Deepavali, the Festival of Lights has all the charm, grandeur and splendour that can even illuminate our minds and hearts while also promoting the much needed peace, harmony and brotherhood in the society. It is a Festival that unifies every religion, every home and every heart.

The festival of Deepavali has a deep spiritual meaning, it essentially means the Awareness of the Inner Light. In a way it is the celebration of the awakening and awareness of the Inner Light which has the power to outshine darkness and clear all obstacles in life.

Deepavali literally means a row or array of lights. Celebrated on the thirteenth/ fourteenth day in the dark half of the Kartika Masa (October - November), it is a celebration of light despite being the darkest night of the darkest period. As every festival in India even the Festival of Deepavali has its own inner significance than mere lighting diyas, wearing new clothes, exchanging

sweets and bursting crackers.

Diwali's essence lies in the sloka, 'Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya' which means "Lead me from darkness to light." Similarly, we have to light the lamp of happiness, the lamp of prosperity and the lamp of knowledge to dispel sorrow, poverty as well as disease.

As per the Vedanta, every devout Hindu has to fill his heart with the oil of love, light the wick with the knowledge of Truth and ward off ignorance. It further states that we can kindle light in many hearts just like a Diya which can light many Diyas.

One of the legends associated with Diwali that Lord Krishna killed demon Narakasura to free the Gopikas, in a way signifies that we have to fight the evil or demonic forces within us by following the path of righteousness.

The festival of Diwali reminds each one of us to understand that life is much more than a mere journey and it is a continuous quest for truth and knowledge.

Unity in Diversity : The legends regarding Diwali also highlight the philosophical truth of the Vedas. The Festival

of Diwali binds people and is a synthesis of spirituality, religion, culture and social values.

In Northern India, people celebrate the Festival of Lights to mark the return of Lord Ram to Ayodhya along with Seta and brother Lakshman after a 14 year exile. While in South India it signifies the victory of Lord Krishna over demon Narakasura. Ultimately both remind us of the necessity to destroy evil forces and strengthen divine forces.

In Western India, Diwali is associated with the legend which states that on this day Lord Vishnu in his 5th incarnation as Vamana, had rescued Lakshmi from the prison of King Bali. This is another reason behind worshipping and invoking Goddess Lakshmi during Diwali.

As per a legend from the epic Mahabharata, it was Karthik Amavasya when the Pancha Pandavas returned from their 12 years of exile. It is said the people who loved the Pandavas celebrated the day by lighting thousands of earthen lamps and distributing sweets.

History says the greatest Hindu king Vikramaditya was coronated on the day of Diwali, which also makes the festival historic and not merely mythological.

The Festival of Diwali is also of great significance to Jains as it is said it was on this day that Lord Mahaveera attained Nirvana or eternal bliss.

The Sikhs too have a reason to celebrate Diwali. History says that it was on this auspicious day that Guru Hargobind, the Sixth Sikh Guru was freed from captivity of Jahangir, the Mughal Emperor. Sikhs also celebrate Diwali to commemorate the laying of the foundation stone for the Golden Temple in 1577.

Sweet Temptations : Diwali is that Festival when sweets continue to tempt us throughout. If there is one festival which boasts of loads and loads of sweets, then it is undoubtedly Deepavali which is just incomplete with sweets. Sweet boxes are generously exchanged among friends and relatives, in a way contributing towards harmonious co-existence.

