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*present*

# Diwali: The Indian Festival of Lights

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(from many sources)

# Diwali, The Indian Festival of Lights



# Significance

- The biggest Indian festival
- Diwali (or Deepavali) means “a row of lights”
- Symbolizes the victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance
- Brings together stories from 3 incarnations of God – Rama, Krishna, and Va:mana, as well as the most popular goddess, Lakshmi
- Celebrated over 3 to 5 days, all over India and abroad

# Deepavali: Row of Lights



# Sweets exchanged with friends



# 5 Days of Deepavali

- 1: **Dhanteras:** most Indian business communities begin their financial year
- 2: **Naraka Chaturdas'i:** God Krishna killed the demon Naraka and freed 16,000 women. God Rama was welcomed by citizens of Ayodhya after defeating demon Ravana.
- 3: **Lakshmi Puja:** Lakshmi, goddess of wealth, is worshipped
- 4: **Bali Padyami:** God Vamana overcame demon Bali
- 5: **Bhai Duj:** Sisters invite their brothers to their homes

# How it is celebrated

- Homes are cleaned, painted and new utensils are bought
- Welcoming Rangoli designs are drawn on pathways, including the goddess' footprints, to mark the arrival of Lakshmi.
- People buy and wear new clothes, gold jewelry
- Families, friends and business associates visit, greet, and treat, and gift one another
- Special worship services are held: In the evening, lamps are lit and Goddess Lakshmi is welcomed into the house. *Aartis* (offerings of light) are made to the image or picture of Lakshmi; devotional songs are sung in praise of Lakshmi. Sweets and fruits are offered to her and to guests.
- Big feasts are held; some engage in a game of gambling.



# Rangoli – Decoration



# 1. Dhan Teras

- Dhan = Wealth; teras = thirteenth day
- Prayer for and celebration of wealth
- Lakshmi = Goddess of wealth, prosperity, and good fortune
- Kubera = God of Wealth, assets
- the business community loves Dhanteras because people customarily purchase precious metals (gold, silver) on this day (India is the largest purchaser of gold in the world.)

## 2. Lakshmi Puja: For Good Fortune and Prosperity



# Lakshmi, goddess of prosperity



# Bangles, gold jewelry





# Indian jewelry

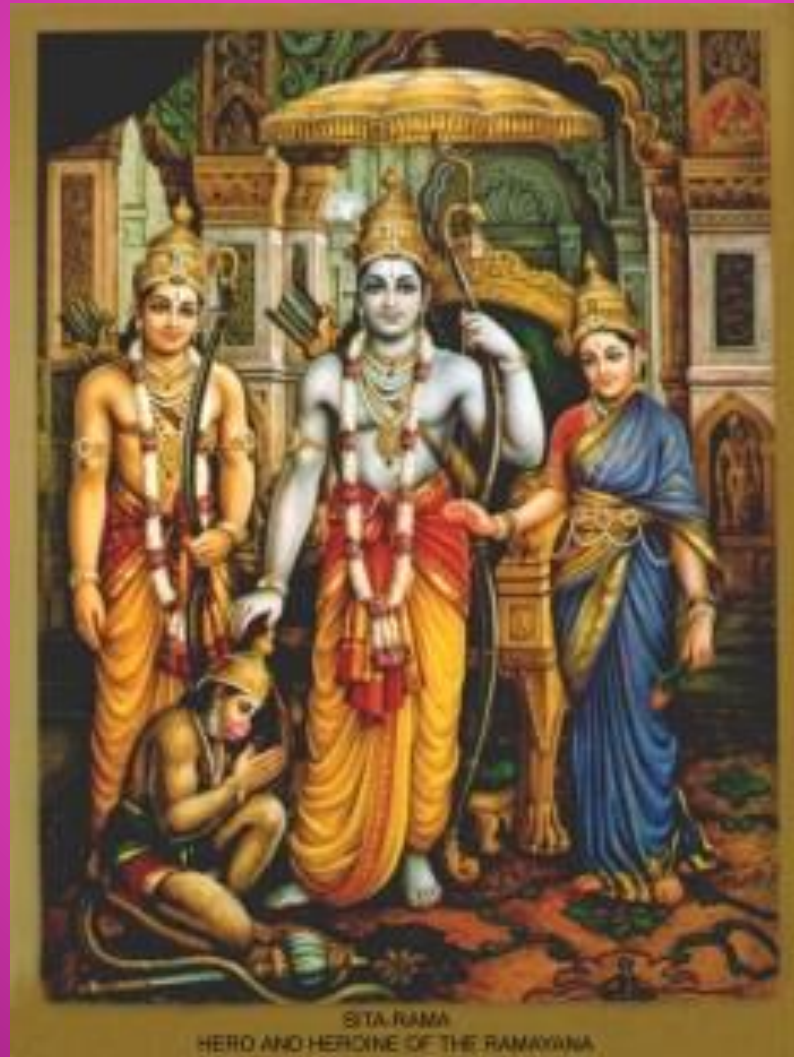


### 3. God Rama's Triumphant Return to Ayodhya

- In the ancient Sanskrit epic "Ramayana," Lord Rama, his wife Sita, and brother Lakshmana returned to their kingdom after 14 years of exile, and victory in war over the demon king Ravana, who had abducted Sita.
- Residents of the capital Ayodhya celebrated by decorating their city with the light of oil lamps
- Rama's return symbolizes the victory of Dharma (justice and good values) over Evil.



# Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman



# Fireworks



# Firecrackers



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# Firecrackers



## 4. Krishna Liberates Women

Deepavali also celebrates another victory of Good (Dharma) over Evil: *Krishna* (God Vishnu's most popular incarnation), with his warrior wife *Satyabhama*, defeated the demon king *Naraka*, who had terrorized the world and imprisoned 16,000 women.

This day is called Naraka Chaturdashi.

# Krishna and Satyabhama (left) kill Naraka and free women



## 5. Day of Bali's return to earth

When the gods felt threatened by the expansionist King Bali, Vishnu takes the incarnation (avata:ra) of *Va:mana*, a young student, and is gifted 3 paces (strides) worth of land by the liberal Bali. Vamana grows gigantic and covers heaven and earth with two strides and sends Bali to the netherworld with the third. Bali is rewarded for his generosity – he is allowed to visit earth annually on this day, and the festival is named after him, Bali Padyami.



God Vishnu, in Vamana incarnation, takes gigantic strides, covering heaven and earth.

Cave sculpture from Badami, Karnataka, 7<sup>th</sup> c.



# Festival for Different Faiths

- Biggest Hindu festival, but not only for Hindus
- For Jains, Diwali marks the attainment of moksha or nirvana by Mahavira in 527 BC.
- For Sikhs, Diwali celebrates the release from prison of the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, and 52 other princes with him, in 1619. In Amritsar, thousands flock to Harmandir Sahib (“The Golden Temple”) a prominent Sikh Gurdwara to pray.

# Children lighting lamps



# Diwali in the United States

- Many schools, community groups, Hindu associations, Indian organizations and corporate businesses celebrate Diwali. Politicians, including governors and presidents, make public proclamations of greetings and well wishes
- Street fair and display of fireworks at South Street Seaport in New York attracts over 100,000 people and hundreds of shops.

# Mysore Palace lit for Diwali





Wish you all a very happy Diwali!

May Diwali bring

all happiness and prosperity

to you, your family and friends!