

ਦੀਵਾਲੀ

The festival of Deepavali (in Sanskrit) means 'Row of Lights'. 'Deepa' meaning Light and 'Avali' meaning Row but through the years, after the language of Sanskrit died down, it changed to Diwali. It is a celebration of life & a day used to strengthen relationships. It starts on the new moon day of the month of 'Kartak', comes exactly 20 days after Dusshera and the celebrations go on for five consecutive days.

ਕਿਉਂ ਵੇਰ ਕਣ ਟੋਏਰਾਣੇ ਦੀਵਾਲੀ?

Diwali symbolises the victory of good over evil, brightness & darkness and the lamps are lit as a sign of celebration and a hope for mankind. 'Diwali rejoices the Inner Light (Atman) or the underlying reality of all things (Brahman).' It also celebrates the return of Lord Ram, King of Ayodhya, with his wife Sita & brother Lakshman, after their win in a war where Ravan was killed. It is believed that they lit oil lamps along the way to light their path in the darkness. Diwali is celebrated a day earlier in South India than in the North and this is because Rama travelled from the South to his kingdom in the North.

ਕਿਹਾਣੀ ਵੇਰ ਕਣ ਵੇਰ ਠਨ ਦੀਵਾਲੀ?

Many families feel it is right to light the home with light symbolic diyas or kandils (colourful paper lanterns) as a part of Diwali decorations. They give gifts, and enjoy firework entertainment in the evening. They observe prayers throughout the day, get together with the family, wear new clothes, eat and make sweets. In South India, Diwali is not about New Year, as the South Indians follow a different calendar, known as the Shalivahana Calendar. In North India, business communities start their financial new year & new account books are opened on this day.

ਦੇਵੀ ਠਨ: ਠਿਹਾਨਟੇਰਾਣੇ

The five day Diwali celebrations begin with Dhanteras, a day which is fully dedicated to the worship of Laxmi. 'Dhan' means wealth, however our culture does not view wealth to be some sort of corruptive power. Infact, we believe that a wealthy person is rewarded for the good deeds from their past life. On this day, houses & business locations are renovated & decorated. The entrances are made colourful with the layout of traditional rangoli designs, to welcome Laxmiji, the Goddess of Wealth & Prosperity. Small footprints are also drawn with rice flour & vermillion to mark her first footsteps into the house. Many families choose to purchase some sort of gold or silver on this day, and 'Laxmi Puja' is performed in the evenings where tiny divas are lit to drive away the shadows of evil spirits.

King Hima's sixteen-year-old son was destined to die by snakebite on the fourth day of his marriage. On the fourth day, his wife did not allow him to sleep. She laid out ornaments & heaps of gold at the entrance of her husband's chamber & lighted lamps all over the place. She spent the night telling stories & singing songs. When Yam, the God of Death arrived in the disguise of a serpent, his eyes were blinded by the sparkle of the lights & he could not enter the prince's chamber. Instead, he climbed on top of the heap & sat there the whole night listening to the songs. In the morning, he went away & it was on that night that her husband was

saved from death. This day is also known as Yamadeepdan & lamps are kept burning throughout the night, in commemoration of Yamraj.

ଦ୍ଵାଦଶ ଦିନ: କାଳୀ ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶ

This day is a welcome to light & knowledge, and the abolishment of laziness and evil. Therefore, the goddess of strength, Kali is worshipped on this day.

King Bali, the King of the netherworld had become a threat to the gods. Lord Vishnu came along in the guise of a Batu Waman (a small boy) and begged to King Bali, hoping he would give some land, as much land that Lord Vishnu could cover with his three steps. King Bali granted him that one wish, and at that moment the Batu Waman transformed to his normal self. With his first step, he covered heaven. With his second step, he covered the earth. He then asked King Bali where to keep his third step. Bali offered his head and as Vishnu did so, Bali fell into the underworld. Lord Vishnu also gave him the lamp of knowledge and allowed him to return to the earth once a year to light millions of lamps and rid darkness & ignorance and to spread the radiance of love and wisdom.

ଦ୍ଵାଦଶ ଦିନ: ଦିଘାଳି

This is a 'no moon' day, where total darkness is seen in the sky. This is the last day of the year in the lunar calendar and lamps are lit, symbolising knowledge & the purpose of the festivities, which should be remembered throughout the year. It is also of great indulgence to gamble on this day. It is believed that Goddess Parvati played dice with her husband, Lord Shiv on the day of Diwali, and she pronounced that those who gamble on this Diwali Night would have a prosperous new year. Old business accounts are settled and new books are opened. The books are worshipped in a special ceremony called 'Chopda Pujan', removing anger, hate & jealousy from their lives.

ଦ୍ଵାଦଶ ଦିନ: ବେଷ୍ଟି ବାରାସ

Bestu Varas is the first day of the New Year, making it a day for forgiveness, the family and wishing the best for everyone. This is the day that everyone can forget their sins from the past year, go to the temple and wish 'Salmubarak' to their loved ones. In many Hindu homes, women place a red tilak on their husband's forehead, garland him and do the 'Aarti' praying for his long life. The husband then shows his appreciation by giving her a costly gift.

Newly married daughters are invited for special meals with their husband. In the olden days, the brothers would go and collect their sisters from their in-laws for this important day.

ଦ୍ଵାଦଶ ଦିନ: ଭାଇ ଭିଜି

This is a day dedicated to the bonding of a brother & their sisters, where they meet and express their love & affection for each other. Yamraj, the God of Death visited his sister Yami on this particular day. She put the auspicious tilak on his forehead, garlanded him and fed him his favourite dishes, cream sweets, talked & enjoyed themselves. Yamraj then gave her a special gift as a token of his love, and in return Yami also gave him a lovely gift with which she had made with her own hands. Since then, this day has been a symbol of love between brothers and sisters.