



CELEBRATION OF DIWALI

Also, called the Deepavali or Festival of Lights for the diyas/candles/lights we adorn our home with. Delicious food, fire crackers, decorating the home with Rangoli, candles, diyas, heartfelt gifts and time with those we care about wishing them happiness and prosperity marks days of festivities. Traditionally, for many Indians Diwali lasts for 5 days.

1. Dhanteras. – When we buy gold/silver coins for investments or cookware to relish good food.
2. Choti Diwali (Naraka Chaturdasi). - Hang up the Toran (door decor) and create the Rangoli with colored powder in many designs. We hang up lights around the home. For Hindus from South of India, this is the day they celebrate by having an oil bath, praying and wearing new clothes.
3. Badi Diwali (Laxmi Puja). – We decorate the whole house with diyas and visit all our friends and relatives.
4. Naya Saal (New Year).-This days marks the beginning of the Hindu calendar or financial year
5. Bhai Dooj. – A day for siblings to celebrate their bond and exchange gifts.

It is important to note, Indians celebrate these days differently. Some celebrate only Diwali day while others may have a two-day celebration. The essence varies depending on sub cultures yet people unite in celebration. Which brings us to the various origins of this festival

ORIGIN STORIES

North India.

As per the epic Ramayan, Lord Ram and Laxman come back home to Ayodhya (on Diwali) after having slain Raavan and saving Sita. Their home coming was with great pomp as the city was adorned with lights.

Another story about the origins of the Diwali is within the epic Mahabharata, when the five Pandavas (5 brothers) came home from their 12 years of banishment as a result of their defeat in the hands of the Kauravas at the game of dice (gambling). The subjects who loved the Pandavas celebrated the day by lighting the earthen lamps.

South India

In South India, Lord Krishna slaying Narakasura who was a demon drunk with power stole the earrings of Aditi (mother of all Devas) and kidnapped 16000 women.

Marwaris and Gujratis

This is when the merchants close the accounts of the old year and pray to the goddess of wealth that the new year should open with even bigger increase of trade.

Jainism

To the Jains it marks the day after Lord Mahavira attained nirvana. He was released from his worldly body on the night of the full moon. So the people of Pavapuri, where he attained nirvana, lit lamps in their doorways as a symbol of their guru's enlightenment.

Sikhism

This day for Sikhs celebrates the release of Guru Hargobindji along with 52 Indian kings who were imprisoned along with him at the Gwalior fort by Emperor Shah Jahan in 1619. This day is thus also known as Bandi Chorr Diwas (meaning the day of freedom).



Nepal

Diwali is also celebrated in Nepal and the Indian states of Assam, Sikkim and Darjeeling in West Bengal. The five-day festival in these places is of great importance as it shows reverence to not just the humans and the Gods, but also animals like crows, cows and dogs.

Historically

In history, this day is celebrated as the coronation day of One of the greatest of Indian kings, Vikramaditya. He was crowned on the Diwali day. Thus, Diwali became a historical event as well.

LESSONS WE LEARN FROM THESE STORIES

These stories only help bring forth the conversation about the following with children -

Love your family. | Stand by what is right. | Freedom is a birth right. | Choices have consequences. | Be careful about spending and save | Women should be respected. | Be loyal | Siblings should look out for each other

Do Not –

Think ill of others | Let ego get in the way of your relationships. | Disrespect those you care about. | Make decisions in haste. | Be selfish or greedy.

HOW TO CELEBRATE DIWALI

You too can bring Diwali into your homes by celebrating in the following ways. Every year start a new ritual that convey life lessons and encourages creativity.

- Make Diwali cards together for your friends.
- Talk to your family about the origin stories of Diwali and the many lessons they hold.
- Create Rangoli at home with flowers or sidewalk chalk or pulses.
- Fill up balloons with glitter or pieces of colored paper.
- Use twigs/leaves from your back yard to create a bon fire.
- Kids could even blow up paper bags and burst giving you the cheerful sound of crackers.
- Make Diyas out of wheat flour. It is very simple and beautiful way to decorate your home.
- Visit a local orphanage or old age home with gifts or treats.
- Cook sweets or cookies together.
- Bursting fire crackers is a long standing tradition but be careful not to disturb others when doing so.
- Organize a potluck or get together to create flower arrangements
- Have Rangoli or Diya making competitions.

Diwali is a wonderful time to connect with your community. In an age where people often get lost in the hustle of everyday life, take time out to celebrate with your friends already enjoying. Visit friends with sweets or handmade gifts, Rangoli designs or art creations. Getting creative together in groups is a wonderful way to bond and break ice with new friends.