



Diwali: Festival of Lights

Deepawali or Diwali is certainly the biggest and the brightest of all Hindu festivals. It's the festival of lights (*deep* = light and *avali* = a row i.e., a row of lights) that's marked by four days of celebration, which literally illumines the country with its brilliance, and dazzles all with its joy. Each of the four days in the festival of Diwali is separated by a different tradition, but what remains true and constant is the celebration of life, its enjoyment and goodness.

The exact day of the festival is decided by the position of the moon. According to the Hindu calendar, Amavasya or 'no moon day' is considered as the perfect day to celebrate Diwali. This dark night comes after every fortnight and in the month of Kartik, it marks this festival of lights and diyas. As per the English calendar, the festival generally comes in the month of November and December. For all Hindu people, the festival holds an imperative meaning since the festival is reckoned with Lord Rama's victory as the King of Ayodhya after his return to the kingdom from 14 years of exile along with his wife Sita & brother Laxman after killing the demon, King Ravana. The festival is celebrated by lighting diyas and candles to drive away the darkness of Amavasya.

The Origin of Diwali

Historically, the origin of [Diwali](#) can be traced back to ancient India, when it was probably an important harvest [festival](#). However, there are various legends pointing to the origin of Diwali or 'Deepawali.' Some believe it to be the celebration of the marriage of Lakshmi with Lord Vishnu. Whereas in Bengal the festival is dedicated to the worship of [Mother Kali](#), the dark goddess of strength. [Lord Ganesha](#), the elephant-headed God, the symbol of auspiciousness and wisdom, is also worshiped in most Hindu homes on this day. In [Jainism](#), Deepawali has an added significance to the great event of Lord Mahavira attaining the eternal bliss of *nirvana*. Diwali also commemorates the return of [Lord Rama](#) along with Sita and Lakshman from his fourteen year long exile and vanquishing the demon-king Ravana. In joyous celebration of the return of their king, the people of Ayodhya, the Capital of Rama, illuminated the kingdom with earthen *diyas* (oil lamps) and burst crackers.

These Four Days

Each day of Diwali has its own tale, legend and myth to tell. The first day of the festival *Naraka Chaturdasi* marks the vanquishing of the demon Naraka by [Lord Krishna](#) and his wife Satyabhama. *Amavasya*, the second day of Deepawali, marks the worship of [Lakshmi](#), the

goddess of wealth in her most benevolent mood, fulfilling the wishes of her devotees. *Amavasya* also tells the story of Lord Vishnu, who in his dwarf incarnation vanquished the tyrant Bali, and banished him to hell. Bali was allowed to return to earth once a year, to light millions of lamps to dispel the darkness and ignorance, and spread the radiance of love and wisdom. It is on the third day of Deepawali — *Kartika Shudda Padyami* that Bali steps out of hell and rules the earth according to the boon given by Lord Vishnu. The fourth day is referred to as *Yama Dvitiya* (also called [Bhai Dooj](#)) and on this day sisters invite their brothers to their homes.

The Significance of Lights & Firecrackers

All the simple rituals of Diwali have a significance and a story to tell. The illumination of homes with lights and the skies with firecrackers is an expression of obeisance to the heavens for the attainment of health, wealth, knowledge, peace and prosperity. According to one belief, the sound of fire-crackers are an indication of the joy of the people living on earth, making the gods aware of their plentiful state. Still another possible reason has a more scientific basis: the fumes produced by the crackers kill a lot of insects and mosquitoes, found in plenty after the rains.

The Tradition of Gambling

The tradition of gambling on Diwali also has a legend behind it. It is believed that on this day, Goddess Parvati played dice with her husband [Lord Shiva](#), and she decreed that whosoever gambled on Diwali night would prosper throughout the ensuing year. Diwali is associated with wealth and prosperity in many ways, and the festival of '[Dhanteras](#)' ('dhan' = wealth; 'teras' = 13th) is celebrated two days before the festival of lights.

From Darkness Unto Light...

In each legend, myth and story of Deepawali lies the significance of the victory of good over evil; and it is with each Deepawali and the lights that illuminate our homes and hearts, that this simple truth finds new reason and hope. From darkness unto light — the light that empowers us to commit ourselves to good deeds, that which brings us closer to divinity. During Diwali, lights illuminate every corner of India and the scent of incense sticks hangs in the air, mingled with the sounds of fire-crackers, joy, togetherness and hope. Diwali is [celebrated around the globe](#). Outside India, it is more than a Hindu festival, it's a celebration of East-Indian identities. If you are away from the sights and sounds of Diwali, light a *diya*, sit quietly, shut your eyes, withdraw the senses, concentrate on this supreme light and illuminate the soul.

Deepawali or [Diwali](#) means "a row of lights". It falls on the last two days of the dark half of the Hindu month of Kartik (October-November).

Mythical Origins of Diwali

There are various alleged origins attributed to this festival. Some hold that they celebrate the marriage of [Lakshmi](#) with [Lord Vishnu](#). In Bengal the festival is dedicated to the worship of [Kali](#). It also commemorates that blessed day on which the triumphant [Lord Rama](#) returned to

Ayodhya after defeating [Ravana](#). On this day also [Sri Krishna](#) killed the demon Narakasura. In South India people take an oil bath in the morning and wear new clothes. They partake of sweetmeats. They light fireworks, which are regarded as the effigies of Narakasura who was killed on this day. They greet one another, asking, "Have you had your Ganges bath?" which actually refers to the oil bath that morning as it is regarded as purifying as a bath in the [holy Ganga](#).

Prosper and Progress, Accounting Year

On this day, Hindu merchants in North India open their new account books and pray for success and prosperity during the coming year. The homes are cleaned and decorated by day and illuminated by night with earthen oil-lamps. The best and finest illuminations are to be seen in Bombay and Amritsar. The famous Golden Temple at Amritsar is lit in the evening with thousands of lamps placed all over the steps of the big tank. [Vaishnavites](#) celebrate the Govardhan Puja and feed the poor on a large scale.

10 reasons to celebrate Diwali

Why do we celebrate Diwali? It's not just the festive mood in the air that makes you happy, or just that it's a good time to enjoy before the advent of winter. There are 10 mythical and historical reasons why Diwali is a great time to celebrate. And there are good reasons not just for Hindus but also for all others to celebrate this great Festival of Lights.

1. Goddess Lakshmi's Birthday: The Goddess of wealth, Lakshmi incarnated on the new moon day (amaavasyaa) of the Kartik month during the churning of the ocean (samudra-manthan), hence the association of Diwali with Lakshmi.

2. Vishnu Rescued Lakshmi: On this very day (Diwali day), Lord Vishnu in his fifth incarnation as Vaman-avtaara rescued Lakshmi from the prison of King Bali and this is another reason of worshipping Ma Lakshmi on Diwali.

3. Krishna Killed Narakaasur: On the day preceding Diwali, Lord Krishna killed the demon king Narakaasur and rescued 16,000 women from his captivity. The celebration of this freedom went on for two days including the Diwali day as a victory festival.

4. The Return of the Pandavas: According to the great epic 'Mahabharata', it was 'Kartik Amavashya' when the Pandavas appeared 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.

5. The Victory of Rama: According to the epic 'Ramayana', it was the new moon day of Kartik when Lord Ram, Ma Sita and Lakshman returned to Ayodhya after vanquishing Ravana and conquering Lanka. The citizens of Ayodhya decorated the entire city with the earthen lamps and illuminated it like never before.

6. Coronation of Vikramaditya: One of the greatest Hindu King Vikramaditya was coroneted on the Diwali day, hence Diwali became a historical event as well.

7. Special Day for the Arya Samaj: It was the new moon day of Kartik (Diwali day) when Maharshi Dayananda, one of the greatest reformers of Hinduism and the founder of Arya Samaj attained his nirvana.

8. Special Day for the Jains: Mahavir Tirthankar, considered to be the founder of modern Jainism also attained his nirvana on Diwali day.

9. Special Day for the Sikhs: The third Sikh Guru Amar Das institutionalized Diwali as a Red-Letter Day when all Sikhs would gather to receive the Gurus blessings. In 1577, the foundation stone of the Golden Temple at Amritsar was laid on Diwali. In 1619, the sixth Sikh Guru Hargobind, who was held by the Mughal Emperor Jahengir, was released from the Gwalior fort along with 52 kings.

10. Arbindo and Ramteerth: the great scholar of Vedas Mr. Arbindo and great Hindu saint Ramteerth have taken their nirvana on this very day of lights.

Lakshmi Puja

Deepavali marks the end of the [harvest](#) season in most of India. Farmers give thanks for the bounty of the year gone by, and pray for a good harvest for the year to come. Traditionally this marked the closing of accounts for businesses dependent on the agrarian cycle, and is the last major celebration before winter. [Lakshmi](#) symbolizes wealth and prosperity, and her blessings are invoked for a good year ahead. ...

There are two legends that associate the worship of Lakshmi on this day. According to the first legend, on this day, Lakshmi emerged from Kshira Sagar, the Ocean of Milk, during the great churning of the oceans, [Samudra manthan](#). The second legend (more popular in western India) relates to the [Vamana](#) avatar of the big three Vishnu, the incarnation he assumed to kill the demon king [Bali](#). On this day, Vishnu came back to his abode the [Vaikuntha](#); so those who worship Lakshmi receive the benefit of her benevolent mood, and are blessed with mental, physical and material well-being.

As per spiritual references, on this day "Lakshmi-panchayatan" enters the Universe. Vishnu, Indra, Kubera, Gajendra and Lakshmi are elements of this "panchayatan" (a group of five). The tasks of these elements are:

- Lakshmi: Divine Energy ([Shakti](#)) which provides energy to all the above activities.
- Vishnu: Happiness (happiness and satisfaction)
- [Kubera](#): Wealth (generosity; one who shares wealth)
- [Indra](#): Opulence (satisfaction due to wealth)
- Gajendra: Carries the wealth

Illuminate Your Inner Self

The light of lights, the self-luminous inner light of the Self is ever shining steadily in the chamber of your heart. Sit quietly. Close your eyes. Withdraw the senses. Fix the mind on this supreme light and enjoy the real Deepavali, by attaining illumination of the soul. He who Himself sees all but whom no one beholds, who illumines the intellect, the sun, the moon and the stars and the whole universe but whom they cannot illumine, He indeed is Brahman, He is the inner Self. Celebrate the real Deepavali by living in Brahman, and enjoy the eternal bliss of the soul.

The sun does not shine there, nor do the moon and the stars, nor do lightning shine and much less fire. All the lights of the world cannot be compared even to a ray of the inner light of the Self. Merge yourself in this light of lights and enjoy the supreme Deepavali.

O man! Wake up from the slumber of ignorance. Realise the constant and eternal light of the Soul, which neither rises nor sets, through meditation and deep enquiry.

May you all attain full inner illumination! May the supreme light of lights enlighten your understanding! May you all attain the inexhaustible spiritual wealth of the Self! May you all prosper gloriously on the material as well as spiritual planes!

You may find some other related detailed info on Wikipedia.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diwali>

This information is collected from many resources and is not limited too. Different scholars and preachers may have different views about Diwali or any related mythological stories in Hinduism. Hinduism does not put a barrier in your life for your own experience or knowledge. It's the way of life with your own experience and own view. You may find some other information related to this or in a different way of explaining.