The Breathtaking Festival of Lights

Posted on



Deepavali, the ‘Festival of Lights’ illuminates households and surroundings by bringing the joy of the festive mode. It is a time to share the joyous spirit with families while recalling the true essence of the festival.

The traditional celebration of Deepavali is entwined in celebrating cultural values and social ties. Temples and households prepare a week ahead of the festival. From beautiful garlands to adorn the deities to colorful and elaborate kolam that beautify the floors of temples and homes and preparation of mouthwatering sweets, there's a lot that Hindus are engaged in celebrating the festival to welcome happiness, prosperity, and good luck.

Deepavali, the lustrous and most anticipated festival in the Hindu calendar, is celebrated on a day selected according to the moon's position during October and November. Commonly known as the 'Festival of Lights, the main occurrence on this day is the lighting of oil lamps and the illuminating of homes and temples. The bright lights from the lamps signify the triumph of light over darkness.

Deepavali, for Hindus, marks the beginning of a new life, and for this reason, it is celebrated during autumn, when all trees shed their leaves and nature itself prepares for a new start.

> Devotees visit temples to seek blessings, conduct poojas at homes, and worship for the well-being of their families. They spread the joy of celebration by sending trays full of sweetmeats to relatives, friends, and neighbors.

The Sanskrit word Deepavali means 'row of lights' when millions of Diyas/ Deepam (clay lamps with coconut oil and a clean cotton wick) are lit in homes. During the festive season, a fascinating sight of twinkling Diyas in intricate designs is painstakingly arranged by family members in a Hindu home. These Diyas are lit in aesthetic splendor in the hallway, living rooms, shrine rooms, and gardens of Hindu homes.

Celebrations in Hindu households begin with cleaning and tidying up, as unclean homes are believed to drive away good fortune. Floors are washed at early dawn and turmeric water sprinkled to ensure purity and cleanliness. After that, vibrant Kolams (geometrical designs drawn with rice flour) are drawn on the floors of sacred and important places of the house like the entrance, shrine rooms, and areas allotted for worship. The Swastika – a symbol of good fortune for Hindus – is drawn on the doorways, walls, and floors. Beautifully decorated or plain diyas are placed on the kolam at entrants as a sign of welcoming Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of

wealth.

All this is done by the women of the house who wake early at dawn and have oil baths (applying oil on the head and bathing). Men, too, follow this custom of having an oil bath, which signifies purity and a new lease of life. While children are cheerfully engaged in joyous festive mode and exchange wishes and enjoy the moments with families. Some light fireworks too. Donned in new clothing, families then gather to partake of richly prepared food. In Sri Lanka, devotees visit temples to seek blessings, conduct poojas at homes, and worship for the well-being of their families. They spread the joy of celebration by sending trays full of sweetmeats to relatives, friends, and neighbors.

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The history of Deepavali consists of many myths and legends and dates back to the sixth century. The commonly believed legend is about Lord Krishna defeating a demon king of India called Narakasura, thus portraying the triumph of good over evil. Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Maha Vishnu, appeared to assist the people suffering from Narakasura’s cruelty and punishment. Demon Narakasura, on his deathbed, regretting his misdeeds, fell on the lotus feet of Lord Maha Vishnu, seeking mercy. He was allowed a boon, and he asked that the day of his death be celebrated with pomp and pageantry. Thus, this day also signifies the triumph of good over evil and knowledge over ignorance.

The liberated people poured oil over their heads, had baths, and lit lamps and crackers to rejoice. The story says that thousands of damsels, held in captivity in the underground world by the demon king, received their freedom on this day. Yet, another story believed by Hindus is the return of Lord Rama, Seeta, and brother Lakshmanan to Ayodha after a 14-year exile in the wilderness. In some parts of India, the festival is celebrated according to the customs and traditions of their lands. Whatever manner it is celebrated, this multi-profile festival brings enjoyment for young ones and a New Year for the traders.

During the breathtaking festival of lights, Hindus worldwide gather in their ancestral homes, exchange gifts and wishes, partake of the traditional food and step into the

New Year with the blessings of their elders.

It is a time to engage in the joyous celebration of the festival with the sparkling glow of lights of hope and prosperity.



Vibrate kolam with beautifully lit lamps add glow to the celebration.



A tray full of mouthwatering sweets.



Garlands to adorn the deities.



Some temples perform special poojas on the day of the festival.



Devotees seek blessings for the wellbeing of their families.