

## Diwali Part 1

The festival of Diwali is celebrated the world over by the Hindus with great fervor. Lakshmi puja which forms the main puja for this festival is performed in homes and offices with great reverence.

However in present times the festival of Diwali, which like all Hindu festivals, can be celebrated to grow spiritually, has come to assume a pre-dominantly social significance. After the puja most people go out to celebrate with family and friends and Diwali balls and all night card parties have become the way in which this festival is celebrated. Most people are not aware that the festival is celebrated for four consecutive days or even why the four days are celebrated. At best they know that Lord Sri Rama returned to his kingdom after slaying Ravana and people light lamps to celebrate his return.

### Meaning

The word 'Diwali' has been derived from the word Dipavali, a Sanskrit word, meaning a row of lights. During Diwali, lamps are lit everywhere. The four days, of Diwali include:

	<b>According to the Hindu Lunar Calendar</b>	<b>According to the year's (2011) English/Roman Calendar</b>
<b>Dhanatrayodashi know as Dhanteras</b>	The thirteenth day (trayodashi) of the dark fortnight of the Hindu lunar calendar month of Ashvin.	24 <sup>th</sup> October
<b>Narak chaturdashi</b>	The fourteenth day (chaturdashi) of the dark fortnight of the Hindu lunar calendar month of Ashvin.	26 <sup>th</sup> October
<b>Lakshmi puja / Divali</b>	The new moon day (amavasya) of the dark fortnight of the Hindu lunar calendar month of Ashvin.	26 <sup>th</sup> October
<b>Balipratipada</b>	The first day (pratipada) of the bright fortnight of the Hindu lunar calendar month of Kartik.	28 <sup>th</sup> October

### **Let us see how these days are celebrated: Day 1:**

Worship of the Deity Dhanavantri: According to Ayurved (Indian medical science) it is the birthday of the deity that bestows immortality, i.e. Dhanvantri. Hence it is also called Dhanvantri jayaniti. On this day Ayurvedic doctors (vaidyas) worship him by making an offering of neem leaves and sugar to visitors. Besides being very good for health (chewing 5-6 of them daily helps prevent maladies), neem leaves, also have the highest ability to absorb Prajapati frequencies.

### **Offering of Lamps:**

On this day, one also performs Yamadipadan, i.e. an offering of lamps to Lord Yama to prevent untimely death. Thirteen lamps made of wheat flour and lit with oil should be placed outside the house, facing southwards (direction of Lord Yama), in the evening.

A lamp is never kept facing southwards except on this day.

Then, reciting the following mantra one should offer obeisance: "I offer these thirteen lamps to the son (Lord Yama) of the Sun deity (Surya), so that He liberates me from the clutches of death and bestows His blessings."

### **Day 2:**

**Ablution with oil (abhyangasnan):** According to Shrimadbhagvat Puran, on this day Lord Krushna slayed a demon, Narkasur. Narkasur asked Lord Krushna for a boon, "On this date (tithi) let one, who takes an auspicious bath (mangalsnan) not suffer in hell." Lord Krushna granted him that boon. Consequently, this day also came to be known as Narak(hell) chaturdashi, and on that day people started taking an auspicious bath (abhyangasnan) before sunrise.

**Yamatarpan and Aarti:** On this day, one performs Yamatarpan, that is, offering to the deity of death (Lord Yama) after an auspicious bath (bath with an oil massage) to overcome untimely death (apamrutyu). Thereafter, the mother moves lit lamps in front of her children's faces to commemorate the celebration of Lord Krushna.

### **Day 3: The new moon day (amavasya) of the month of Ashwin**

Generally, the new moon day is considered inauspicious; however, this day is an exception to the rule. Since it is still not auspicious for all events, it is more appropriate to call it a day of happiness rather than an auspicious day.

The deities Lakshmi and Kuber are worshipped on this day. Lakshmi is the deity of wealth, but Kuber is the treasurer. Some people possess the art of earning money but do not know how to save it. However, saving money and spending it appropriately is far more important than earning it. Since most people do not know how to spend money properly, their spending is unwarranted and ultimately, they become bankrupt. Kuber is the deity who teaches the art of saving money as He Himself is the treasurer. Therefore, in this ritual, the worship of Lakshmi and Kuber has been recommended. Though all people celebrate this festival, the business community in particular does so with great enthusiasm and splendor. The celebration of this is as follows:

Bath with an oil massage before sunrise is recommended on all the three days from Narak chaturdashi to Balipratipada. With an ordinary bath the raja and tama components decrease by 1/100,000% and the sattva component increases by the same amount for duration of only three hours. However, with the oil bath it lasts for four to five hours. An oil bath consists of an oil massage to facilitate the absorption of oil by the skin, followed by a warm water bath. Oil should be applied to retain elasticity of the skin. Warm water is auspicious and pleasing to the body. Bathing after an oil massage retains only that amount of oiliness that the skin and hair require. Hence, an oil massage is necessary before a bath. Application of oil after a bath is inappropriate.

### **Lakshmipujan:**



On this day, one performs worship of deity Lakshmi, the deity of prosperity. In the afternoon, a rite for the departed souls (parvanshraddha) and an offering of meals to Lord Brahma (who created the Universe) is done and in the evening, in a pandal decorated with creepers and leaves, Lakshmi, Vishnu, Kuber, and other deities are worshipped in the following manner: A statue or picture of

Lakshmi should be installed on a seat on which either an octapetalled lotus or a svastik is drawn with consecrated rice (akshata). Next to Her, a statue of Kuber is placed on a pot (kalash). Then, all these deities are offered a sacrament of a mixture of coagulated cow's milk (khava), sugar, cardamom and cloves. Then, items like coriander, jaggery, and corn from parched, uncleaned rice, sugar candies (battase), etc., are offered to Lakshmi and distributed. The Puranas (Hindu spiritual texts) narrate that on this night, Lakshmi enters the ideal home, which besides being clean, is inhabited by men who are faithful, dutiful, merciful, and righteous, have control over passions and are devotees of God, and women who are virtuous and chaste.

**Cleaning the house:** Development of virtues gains importance only if in the process, defects are overcome. Just as one makes efforts to acquire wealth (Lakshmi), poverty (alakshmi) should be destroyed. To signify that, on this day a new broom is bought. It is called Lakshmi. At midnight one should sweep the house with that broom, accumulate the garbage in a dustpan and throw it out. This is called 'driving off' of alakshmi (garbage - poverty). Sweeping/vacuuming the house and throwing the garbage out at night is forbidden on other days.

**Decoration with lit lamps:**

Lamps should be lit both inside and outside the house on all the evenings of Divali. This gives the house a decorative look and generates enthusiasm and joy. Earthen lamps lit with oil are more decorative and soothing than a string of electric bulbs. This is in alignment with the Vedic teaching that one should go from darkness (spiritual ignorance) to light (spiritual knowledge). Offering lit lamps attracts Lakshmi. Each and everyone should celebrate the religious festival of Dipavali with enthusiasm so that Lakshmi perpetually inhabits one's home and one is enlightened with spiritual knowledge. This helps to maintain happiness and prosperity in the family.

**Decoration with lanterns (akashkandil):**

The lantern should be hung outside the house on a tall pole. The pole should be held in the ground by burying its base and the lantern should be hung on it with the help of a string. This lantern should be displayed from the eleventh day (ekadashi) of the bright fortnight of the month of Ashvin till the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kartik. To gain prosperity, the lantern should be ritualistically installed, repeating the mantra: "I am offering this lantern along with the lamp to The Supreme Almighty Damodar. May He endow me with prosperity"

**Rangoli:** The word rangoli is derived from the Sanskrit word 'rangavali' (an array of colors). It is both an auspicious and a preliminary necessity in any religious ritual.



The two aims of drawing rangoli are revelation of beauty and acquisition of auspiciousness. It is a practice to draw rangoli at the site of any auspicious religious ritual such as a holy festival, a religious festival, an auspicious function, ritualistic worship, a vowed religious observance, etc. During Divali various rangoli designs are drawn at the doorstep and decorated with different colours.

#### **Day 4:**

This is the half among the three-and-a-half auspicious moments (sade teen muhurtas). It is called Balipratipada, as King Bali was stripped of his kingdom and sent to the netherworld, as a punishment for making offerings unto the undeserving. Hence, a picture of King Bali and his queen is drawn with rangoli on the floor and worshipped. Then for the sake of Bali's generosity, lamps and clothes are donated.

Women move lamps in front of their husbands. One feast on a meal and people don new attire and celebrate the whole day. The mountain Govardhan (Govardhanpuja) is also worshipped on this day, by making a heap of cow dung and tucking durva (a sacred grass) and flowers into it. Images of Lord Krushna, the cowherds, Lord Indra, cows and calves are arranged alongside and also worshipped. Then, all the images are taken out in a procession, to commemorate Lord Krushna's saving the cowherds and their herds from torrential rains by holding up the mountain Govardhan like an umbrella over them, with His finger.

#### **To Progress Spiritually During Festivals**

To progress spiritually, we need to imbibe all the qualities of the Lord. Just as a droplet of water tinged with oil cannot blend with water, a devotee of Ram cannot merge into Ram without acquiring all His attributes. During the celebration of festivals, worship the Deities to imbibe their qualities.

Reference: [www.forumforhinduawakening.org](http://www.forumforhinduawakening.org)

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