

Deepawali Or Diwali

Diwali is one of the major Indian festivals celebrated all over India. It is most important, eagerly waited and celebrated with high spirits. It is celebrated to honour the victory of good over evil. The deities of Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha are worshipped on Diwali, after which, the people share sweets and gifts with their relatives and friends. Fireworks, which attract the kids the most, form the highlight of the festival. Young and old, men and women, all dress up in new clothes on this day to illuminate their home with earthen lamps.

Meaning

Originally, the name was Deepawali, which has its origin from Sanskrit, meaning "rows of Deep" or "row of light". Over the years the name has been pronounced as Diwali.

Five-day festival

It falls on the two days of the dark half of Kartik. But generally it is observed as five-day festival with a number of customs and ceremonies followed during each day. People prepare themselves for the festival weeks ahead, by cleaning and decorating their premises.

The first day is called "Dhanteras", on which new utensils and silver ware is brought to the house.

The second day is called "Chhoti Diwali", which normally involves preparation for the next day.

The next day, or third day is the Badi Diwali. It is main festival which falls on no-moon day of Kartik Month. On this day Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped.

The fourth day is the Govardhan Puja when Lord Krishna saved the Gokul from the curse of Inder devta by picking the Goverdhan Parvat on his little finger. In North India Annkut (many varieties of food) is prepared in temples.

The last day of five day festival is Bhai Dooj.

History of Diwali

There are different assumed backgrounds related to festival.

In North India it is celebrated to rejoice the return of Lord Rama with Sita Mata to Ayodha after 14 years of exile. On this occasion residents of Ayodha illuminated their houses with lights. Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped. 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.

In South India it is related with victory of Sri Krishna over demon Naraksura. In South India people take an oil bath in the morning and wear new clothes. They exchange sweets. They light fireworks which are regarded as the effigies of Narakasura who was killed on this day.

In Bengal the festival is dedicated to the worship of Kali Maa.

In Jainism Diwali is very important because Swami Mahavira attained Nirvana on this day.

In Sikhism it is very important day. On this day their sixth guru Guru Hargobind Ji got release from prison. The Sikhs celebrated the return of Guru Har Gobind by lighting the Golden Temple and this tradition continues today.

Customs

There are many customs and traditions associated with Diwali, namely, burning of crackers, playing cards, lighting of lamps, wearing new clothes, distribution of sweets, exchange of gifts etc.

Importance

It is said that Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth, roams the earth on this day and enters the house that is pure, clean and brightly illuminated. The lights of Diwali means lighting the lives of people, the sounds of crackers means killing all evils, the prayers means purity.

Diwali is a great joining force. On this day atmosphere is so powerful that brings a change in hearts of every man and woman in the world. People greet each other.