



# DEEPĀVALI

“FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS”

# **FESTIVAL: DEEPĀVALI**

- **From “Hindu Festivals and Celebrations” by Smt. Anasuya Sastry and other sources**
- **“Deepa” means light or lamp and “avali” means row**
- **Literally Deepavali means “row of lights”**
- **The festival celebrates the triumph of good over evil**
- **The festival is celebrated over 5 days**

# FESTIVAL: DEEPĀVALI

- The 1<sup>st</sup> day of Deepāvali is called *Dhana trayodaśi* (13<sup>th</sup> day of the dark half of the month Aaṣwija)
  - Homes are cleaned with special care and decorated
  - Rangoli and other decorations make the home festive
  - People share greetings and help each other joyfully

# FESTIVAL: DEEPĀVALI

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Deepāvali is called *Naraka chaturdaśi* (14<sup>th</sup> day of the dark half of the month Aaṣwija)
  - Narakāśura terrorized the people of his kingdom, kidnapped and imprisoned women, and stole the diamond earrings of Aditi
  - *Naraka chaturdaśi* marks the day when Lord Kṛṣṇa slayed Narakāśura with his *Sudarṣana Cakra* in the asura's Capital city of Prāgjyotisapura (in present day Assam)
  - After slaying Narakāśura, Lord Kṛṣṇa applied oil etc. and bathed; it is said that Ganga granted a special boon that she would be present in all waters on the morning of *Naraka chaturdaśi*
  - In Bengal, devotees do special prayers and pujas to Kāli

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- The 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Deepāvali is called *Amavasya* (new moon day)
  - On this day people take a bath in rivers and give oblations and pay homage to their departed ancestors
  - This is an important day for the business communities of Gujarat and Rajasthan
  - This is a special day for the Jains because Sri Mahavira attained *Nirvana* on this day
  - Goddess Mahalakṣmi is especially worshipped on this day
  - The business community does special prayers at the *go dhuli lagna* (when cows return home in the evening from grazing) and distribute the Prasad and money to their neighbors

# FESTIVAL: DEEPĀVALI

- The 4<sup>th</sup> day of Deepāvali is called *Bali Padyami* (1<sup>st</sup> day of the first half of the month Kartika)
  - King Bali, the grandson of Prahalada, was the ruler of Kerala
  - Greedy and arrogant, he occupied territory upto Amaravati
  - King Bali performed a yagna (fire ritual) and promised that he would fulfill any wish of anyone during the yagna
  - Lord Viṣṇu incarnated as a boy *Vamana* came to the yagna!

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- **King Bali and Vamana Avatara.....**
  - *Vamana* asked for three paces of land
  - Thinking nothing of it, King Bali granted the little boy his wish
  - Lord Viṣṇu then assumed his Virāt (large) form and he occupied the earth with one step and the heavens with the other
  - King Bali realized that this was none other than the Lord and bowed down his head so the Lord could put his foot there as the third pace of land (because King Bali was out of land!)
  - The story shows how arrogance can lead one to ruin and that the way out of misery is to surrender to the Lord
  - In Kerala, this festival is celebrated in a grand way as **Oṇam**

# FESTIVAL: DEEPĀVALI

- The 4<sup>th</sup> day of Deepāvali is also celebrated in North India as the day of return of Lord Rama from exile
  - People celebrate the return of Lord Rāmā to the Kingdom of Ayodhya after Lord Rāmā slayed Ravaṇa
  - Lord Rāmā, Lakṣmana, Sita and Hanuman left Lanka on the divine *Puṣpaka Vimana* on the Vijaya Daṣami day, which falls 20 days before the 4<sup>th</sup> day of Deepāvali (when they arrived in Ayodhya)



# FESTIVAL: DEEPĀVALI

- **The 5<sup>th</sup> day of Deepāvali is celebrated as Bhayya Dooj or Bahu Beej in North India, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and North Karnataka**
  - **On this day brothers make a special effort to visit their sisters**
  - **The sister applies tilak and performs ārti to the brother and the brother gives his sister a gift on this day**
  - **This celebration of family strengthens the emotional bond between brother and sister**

# FESTIVAL: DEEPĀVALI

- **What is the significance of the word “Deepavali”?**

**It reveals what is in our scriptures to be the ultimate truth and how we can be free from bondage**

- **The Br̥hadaraṇyaka Upaniṣad (I.3.28) says:**

*Asatomā sadgamaya* (Lead me from the “non-real” to the Real)

*Tamasomā jyotirgamaya* (Lead me from darkness to Light)

*Mṛtyormā amṛtam(n)gamaya* (Lead me from death to Immortality)

- **This is possible only when we are free from ignorance**

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- **What is this ignorance?**
  - **We see the differences in ourselves and others very easily**
  - **We do not see the oneness in creation**
  - **We are unable to recognize this reality because our intellect is clouded with ignorance**
- **When our intellect is clouded with ignorance we see only the differences**
  - **We have a very strong identification with the body-mind complex**
  - **We think “I am essentially or intrinsically different (substitute “better” “smarter” etc.) than him/her”**

# FESTIVAL: DEEPĀVALI

- **When the darkness of ignorance is removed from our intellect (mind & heart) we are able to see the truth for what it is**
- **TAT TVAM ASI**
- **The notion of “I am different from him/her” disappears and the individual becomes a lighted lamp or “deepam”**
- **This “deepam” can then share the truth with others still mired in ignorance and light the lamp in that individual**
- **Soon we have a “row” or group of individuals who see the truth for what it is and we have an “avali” of “deepams”**



**WISH YOU ALL A  
WONDERFUL  
DEEPĀVALI**

**MAY WE LIGHT THE LAMP IN OUR LIVES  
AND IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS!**