

DIWALI

Diwali is celebrated by people all over the world. It is known as the 'festival of lights' and the word diwali means 'row of lamps'. Diwali celebrates the triumph of good over evil and the glory of light overcoming darkness, a beam of hope over despair.



A traditional 'diya' or 'diva' lamp

For Hindus, Diwali marks a new beginning, a renewal of commitment to family values, and represents all the good virtues we seek such as love, reflection, forgiveness and knowledge. The story of Rama and Sita is central to the Hindi understanding and celebration of Diwali. Hindus observe Diwali over a period of 5 days.



Sikhs celebrate Diwali to express their joy at the return of the 6th Guru, Guru Har Gobind Ji in 1620. Emperor Jahangir had imprisoned him along with 52 Hindu kings. The Guru was granted freedom but refused to leave until the kings were also released. To commemorate his determination and loyalty, people lit the way to the Golden Temple in his honour.

The Jains celebrate Diwali as a festival of light, a symbol of the knowledge that was given by Lord Mahavira for the peace and welfare of all living beings.



Rama and Sita

There was a prince called Rama, who fell in love with a beautiful princess called Sita. Rama and Sita got married. The king wanted Rama to eventually become king, but one of his wives asked that her son be made king and for Rama to be sent into the forest for 14 years. The king was very sad, but he had promised his wife she could have anything she wanted. So he sent Rama and Sita away.

Rama's brother Lakshman also went with them. They obediently lived in the forest for many years, then one day a golden deer ran by them and Sita asked Rama and Lakshman to catch the deer for her as it was so beautiful. Rama chased the deer but it had all been a trick to get Rama away from Sita.

When Rama did not return Lakshman went to look for him. While Sita was alone an old man came by and he asked Sita for somewhere to rest and have some food. The man was really the ten-headed Ravana, who wanted to capture Sita and make her his wife. Ravana kidnapped Sita and took her to his castle on an island.

When Rama found out where Sita was he was very upset and set out to rescue her. Rama needed help and he went to Hanuman the monkey army general. Hanuman was pleased to help and he jumped over to the island and found Sita there. He told Rama where she was and Rama went to fight Ravana. Ravana sent his army to fight the battle with Rama and Hanuman's army.

They fought for a long time until the only one left was Hanuman. He found some herbs to bring them all back to life, then Rama fought Ravana and killed him with a magical spear, Rama and Sita were together again.

14 years passed and the people of the kingdom were waiting for Rama to come home. A woman decided to put a small lamp in her window to light the way for Rama and Sita, other people in the villages saw this and they put lamps in their windows until everyone in the kingdom had lamps lit. The whole kingdom was glowing with light and as Rama and Sita made their way home they saw the glowing lamps and followed them home. Rama was crowned king and Sita was his queen, and there was lots of celebration in the kingdom.