

## ***DEEPAVALI***

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A Hindu festival is a celebration that integrates spiritual, philosophical, religious and cultural aspects of human life. The ***spiritual*** aspect is based on the basic human instincts of joy and happiness. The ***philosophical*** aspect is based on the basic principle of the victory of good over evil in the constant struggle between them. The victory of good is to be celebrated. This is to remind ourselves and also our future generations that in the fight between good and evil, the good shall win. The ***religious*** aspect deals with the particular rituals of that festival. The mythological stories that are related to the particular manifestation of the God (Supreme Being) provide the religious strength for the festival. The ***cultural*** aspect deals with the customs, activities, food, dress, social interaction with family and friends etc.

***DEEPAVALI*** is a major Hindu festival that comes in early part of November. Deepavali means “Row of Lamps”. The festival is celebrated on New moon day that is a day of darkness. Several stories are associated with this festival. The major story is that of Lord Krishna killing the demon Narakasura. Also, “Naraka” means “Hell”. The demon Narakasura had kept several good kings, citizens including thousands of women in dark prison. It was the helpless cry of these innocent people as prisoners that brought the Supreme Being in the manifestation of Lord Krishna to kill the demon Narakasura and free the prisoners. At the time of death demon Narakasura repented for the wicked deeds and asked for grace. Lord Krishna with mercy declared that let people celebrate the end of tyranny by lighting lamps to dispel the darkness. The day of ***DEEPAVALI*** begins with special bath with oil, wearing new dress, ritual of worship, special foods and in the night lighting the lamps and firing crackers to celebrate through the sounds of joy. The family and friends meet on this day to wish greetings and celebrate together.

Also, on *Deepavali* day the merchants observe the beginning of new yearly accounting. This signifies the review of the accounting both in their business and also in life. The revision of accounting signifies the “forget and forgive” principle and restarting our joyful relationship with family and friends. Goddess Lakshmi represents the wealth both materialistic and spiritual. On *Deepavali*, worship of Goddess Lakshmi is also carried out for Her blessings on restarting our worldly and spiritual accounting.

Also, the return of Lord SriRama to Ayodhya after killing the demon Ravana is celebrated on this day. The victorious return of Lord SriRama signifies the spiritual fulfillment of the journey (of seeking Goal of life) after destroying the evil forces and strengthening the divine forces.

Thus we see that *Deepavali* encompasses all domains of human life namely physical emotional, analytical and spiritual. The celebration includes both the individual and societal levels. Thus the purpose of Hindu festivals is to provide enlightenment, education and joy at the most basic levels of human experience.