

October 2008  
Newsletter Issue 5

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## Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

A big thank you to all the children for writing such amazing articles. The purpose of our newsletter is to help children develop mentally and spiritually. I am proud to say this is one of the best issues of KS-SOS newsletter for 2008. Our newsletter this month includes 12 articles, contributed from children from elementary school to College.

Diwali is an especially important topic as it relates to Indian culture and heritage. Many children today forget the meaning of Diwali, and simply see it as another Christmas (to receive gifts). I can gladly say though, that a parent told me recently, how having to write an article on Diwali inspired her son to research Diwali, and its significance.

I was personally very impressed with the response I received regarding this topic. Many children explained Ramayan and its significance. Other children took on a deeper perspective and looked at Diwali from the spiritual view.

I would encourage parents to ask their kids to continue writing articles for our newsletter. The topics we keep for the newsletter are well thought out topics that promote children to think deeper, and think about a good cause.

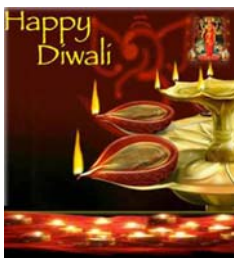
Being in high school I understand life can get extremely busy for kids and parents. But it is important for parents to promote ethical thinking in their family. One way they can do this is through encouraging their kids to write a article every month on the topic we provide.

Another way is having children attend our monthly Children Satsang. This month we had a wonderful Children Satsang with a special cultural show on Diwali. In the beginning the children presented a skit on the Importance of Diwali, and later the little kids presented a dance prepared by them to welcome the auspicious festival. We also had children present spectacular presentations on Diwali!! Everyone had fun and enjoyed the meal in the end.

For more information on our Children Satsang and Newsletter visit our website <http://www.sos-kc.org/childrencorner.html>. It carries our past newsletters, pictures to our past events, and information on our upcoming events. Pictures from the Diwali Satsang are at the end of this newsletter, do check them out!!

With this thought I invite you to read our DIWALI newsletter. **And to everyone, Happy Diwali and a prosperous new year!**

**- GAUVRI GORAWARA**



## Diwali—The inner & outer lighting.



Diwali, Deepawali, or “Row of Lighted lamps” is the ancient festival that has existed ever since man became aware of truth and untruth, darkness and light, death and immortality. It falls on the *Amavasya* of the month of *Kartik* every year in the Hindu calendar. Diwali is celebrated on the fifteenth day in the dark half of *Kartik* (October - November). It is the darkest night of the darkest period. Diwali comes exactly twenty days after *Dussehra*. While *Deepawali* is popularly known as the “festival of lights”, the most significant meaning is “the awareness of the inner light”.

Just as we light our homes and streets with lights, we need to recognize the inner light that is present in all of us. This inner light connects us with God and guides us during our arduous journey through life. In a spiritual context, as this light penetrates inwards, it brightens all aspects of life, driving away darkness (of ignorance) and ushering in the light (of knowledge and Divinity.)

Diwali is the most festive and joyful time of the year. During this festive season, it is common custom for every home to be brightly lit and decorated. Although there are several interpretations on the symbolism and rituals surrounding Diwali, one such interpretation is that it is a celebration of Lord Rama’s glorious return to his Kingdom after fourteen years of exile in the forests. The people of Ayodhya were so delighted that they lit thousands of earthen oil lamps to welcome Lord Rama back home. This commemoration of Lord Rama’s return signifies the triumph of good over evil; of righteousness over treachery; of truth over falsehood and indeed, of light over darkness.

Another interpretation according to Hindu mythology is that Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, goes from house to house on this night and enters only those houses, which are illuminated and avoids those in darkness.

On a deeper level, Diwali signifies the light which dispels the darkness of ignorance; it is the light which illuminates our journey through life. The purpose is not to glorify the light of the candle, nor the brilliance of the firecracker. The purpose is to glorify the light of God as He bestows the real and everlasting light upon the darkness of this mundane world. Why do we decorate our homes with lanterns and candles? These lanterns signify God’s light, penetrating through the ignorance and sins of our daily lives. A home bathed in light is a home in which anger, pain and ignorance are dispelled; it is a home that is close to God. However, too many people are more concerned with an outward aesthetic display and spend days and a great deal of money to purchase the most beautiful candles and lamps. The true light of Diwali should be within us. It should symbolize the personal relationship between God and us. It should not focus on the decorations solely to attract attention from passing cars, or to become the envy of the neighborhood. The spiritual “light” of Diwali should penetrate inward, as only that will have lasting benefit.

Diwali also marks the beginning of the Hindu New Year. In the joyous mood of this season, we clean our homes, and our offices. It is a day of “starting afresh”.

As we perform our “house-keeping”, we must not forget our own self. What about cleansing our hearts and minds? That is where the real cleaning begins. That is the real meaning of “starting afresh”. We must clean our hearts, ridding them of darkness and bitterness; we must make them clean and sparkling places for God to dwell. We must be as thorough with ourselves as we are with our homes. We should look inwardly and ask, “Are there any dark corners in our hearts we have avoided for so long? Are we simply ‘sweeping all the dirt under the rug’?” At this time, we need to cleanse ourselves, so God’s light can shine through.

The third, and perhaps most important, aspect of Diwali is the worship of Maha Lakshmi. Maha Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth and prosperity. On Diwali, we pray to her for prosperity and ask her to lavish her blessings upon us. Yet, all too often, we infer “prosperity” to mean money, material possessions, and earthly pleasures. However, this is NOT the true wealth in life; this is not what makes us prosperous. We should remember that it is only God’s presence in our lives that makes us rich and illuminates our lives. Some people may not have material possessions and it may seem like these people live a less fortunate life than others. But if we look a little closer, we will see that what we refer to as “poor people” have a light shining in their eyes, a glow on their faces and a song in their hearts. Money certainly cannot buy that. On Diwali, we pray to Maha Lakshmi to bestow real prosperity upon us, the prosperity that brings light to our lives and sparkle to our eyes. We must pray for an abundance of faith, and not money. Rather than for the attainment of material wealth, we must pray for success in our spiritual lives. On this holy day, we must fill our hearts and minds with the light of God.

The true meaning of Diwali can be expressed as being able to bring light where darkness prevails, to bring truth where untruth prevails, to bring life where death prevails, to brighten our surroundings, and to illumine our minds. Diwali is about realizing and understanding the inner light that resides within all of us.

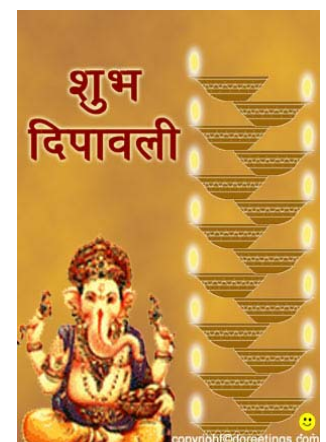
**May this festival of lights light up your life, and may your future be bright!**  
- SUHANI GANDHI (10th Grade)



### **What's so special about 28<sup>th</sup> of October, 2008??**

Diwali is a festival of lights. Diwali is celebrated on different days. This year it is on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October. Last year it was on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November! We celebrate Diwali for many reasons. But, the main reason is the return of Ram, Lakshman, and Sita to Ayodhya. When they returned to Ayodhya the whole town had diyas lighted. That is why we light diyas at our homes. Now, that is not the only reason. We also light diyas because the more light in your house the better chance of Goddess Lakshmi to come to your house and give you wealth and prosperity. On Diwali people exchange gifts, sweets, crack fireworks and most importantly they do the pooja of Goddess Lakshmi. On Diwali people also clean up their homes and forget everything bad that has happened in the past. This is what I think Diwali is all about.

- ARCHITA GOYAL ( 4th Grade)



## The Story behind Diwali

Diwali is the festival of lights. It is celebrated to welcome home Rama Ji, Lakshman Ji, and Sita Ji. They are being welcomed home because they just came back from 14 years in exile. They had to go to exile because King Dhasharat gave Kaikey two boons. The boons are wishes and she can ask King Dhasharat for anything and he will have to give it to her. For the first boon she asked for him to send his son, Rama, to the forest in exile for 14 years. The second boon was used to make her son, Bharat, the King of Ayodhya. Rama went to the forest with no hesitation, but Lakshman and his wife, Sita, came along with him. Before he left he told Rama that he didn't want to be king so he kindly took Rama's slippers and placed them on the throne. When Rama came back the slippers of his were still there and Bharat wanted him to take over as king. When Rama, Lakshman, and Sita left, Rama's father, King Dhasharat cried and cried. He was so sad that one of his own wives wanted to send his own son to the forest in exile for fourteen years. He cried so much that later on he died. Rama's mother was heartbroken at what Kaikey had asked for. All three of the wives, Kaikey, Kaushalya, and Sumitra, had been good friends and liked each other very much. After Kaikey did this they were not very good friends anymore. They could not mistreat her though because she was Bharat's mother and because she was family so they did her no harm. They celebrate it as the festival of lights because when Rama was gone it was like darkness and when he came back there was a lot of light and happiness.

There are a couple of days in diwali. The First Day is called Dhanteras. It is in fact the thirteenth lunar day of Krishna Paksh, the dark fortnight of the month of kartik. On this day, Lord Dhanwantari came out of the ocean with Ayurvedic for mankind. This day marks the beginning of Deepawali celebrations. On this day at sunset, Hindus should bathe and offer a lighted diya with Prasad to Yama Raj, the Lord of Death and pray for protection from untimely death. This offering should be made near a Tulsi tree, the Holy Basil or any other sacred tree one might have in their yard.

The Second Day is called Choti Diwali. On this day Lord Krishna destroyed the demon Narakasur and made the world free from fear. On this day, one should massage the body with oil to relieve it of tiredness, bathe and rest so that Diwali can be celebrated with vigour and devotion. On this night, Yama Diya should not be lit. The Shastras declares that Yama Diya should be offered on Triodasi Night with Prasad. Some people mistook it to mean that because Yama Diya was lit on that night, that is should always be lit on the night before Diwali. This is absolutely not true. It is advisable that one consults with a learned Pandit of hindu Astrologer for proper guidance on this matter.

The third day is called Lakshmi Puja on Diwali This is the day when worship unto Mother Lakshmi is performed. Hindus cleanse themselves and join with their families and their Pandit and they worship the divine Goddess Lakshmi to achieve the blessings of wealth and prosperity, the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness.

The fourth day is called Padwa & Govardhan Puja. On this day, Govardhan Pooja is performed. Many thousands of years ago, Lord Krishna caused the people raja to perform Govardhan Pooja. From then on, every year Hindus worship Govardhan to honour that first Pooja done by the people of Vraja. Bhai fota among Bengalis. Bhai for a is an event especially among Bengalis when the sister prays for her brother's safety, success and well being.

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The fifth day is called Bhai Duj. This is the day after Govardhan Pooja is performed and normally two days after Diwali day. It is a day dedicated to sisters. Many moons ago, in the vedic era, Yama visited his sister Yamuna on this day. He gave her sister a boon that whosoever visits her on this day shall be liberated from all sins. They will achieve Moksha of final emancipation. From then on, brothers visit their sisters on this day to enquire of their welfare. This day marks the end of the five days of Diwali celebrations. This is also known as Bhai fota among Bengalis. Bhai for a is an event especially among Bengalis when the sister prays for her brother's safety, success and well being.

- ANUJ GOYAL (7th Grade)

### Reasons Why Diwali Is Celebrated:

Diwali is a festival that most Indians celebrate. Most of the time they decorate their house with lights of all kinds, lanterns, lamps, and small clay lamps. The sight is a beauty. Diwali is celebrated because of some reasons. Here are a few reasons.

Lakshmi is an Indian goddess who gives wealth. She visits clean houses and gives them a good year. If they don't have a clean house she probably does not go in.

- Business people worship her because they want her to keep their business running through the whole next year.
- It is also celebrated because Lord Rama came back home with his wife Sita and his brother Lakshman. Little lamps made out of clay called "diyas" are lit out to welcome them back from a 14-year exile in the forest.

Kids enjoy Diwali because they get to wear lovely new clothes, eat delicious sweets and in India they get to play with fire crackers.

This is our festival of lights and we all enjoy the celebrations with family and friends.

-KANISHKA MEHRA(3th Grade)

### My Favorite Festival

**Diwali** is my favorite festival. I like it a lot because on these days we all get together with Family and friends, eat lots of tasty food and buy new clothes and fireworks.

Diwali is a five day festival in India. **Dhanteras** is the first day of Diwali. On this day people buy jewellery, silver and gold coins. On the second day, **Roop Chaudas** people wake up early in morning and bath with Uptan. On the third and the main Diwali day idols of Ganesha and Lakshmi are worshiped, it is called **Lakshmi Pujan**. This is the most important day of Diwali. On this day Kali Puja is also performed in Bengal. Skies are full of blooms of crackers. The night of amavasya is transformed into Purnima by glory of diyas. Fourth day is celebrated as new year according to Hindu calander. **Bhaiya dhuj** which is celebrated on fifth day glorifies love between a brother and a sister.

Diwali is also called "**FESTIVALS OF LIGHT**" !! **WISH YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY DIWALI 2008 !!!!**

- NEAL KHODASKAR( 5th Grade)

## Victory of good over evil.

Diwali is certainly the biggest of all Hindu festivals. It's the festival of lights that's marked by five days of celebration, which literally lights the country with its brilliance and dazzles all with its joy.

The first day of Diwali is "Dhan-Teras" This day people buy new things but at the same time they share food, clothes with needy and poor. The second day of the festival, *Naraka Chaturdasi*, marks the vanquishing of the demon Naraka by Lord Krishna and his wife Satyabhama. Govardhan Pooja/ *Lakshmi Pooja* is the third day of Deepawali. This marks the worship of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth in her most kind mood, fulfilling the wishes of her devotees. The fourth day is referred to as *Bhai Dooj* and on this day sisters invite their brothers to their homes. Finally The main day of Diwali is when Ram returned to Ayodhya after 14 years of Exile . This day many people worship goddess Lakshmi. It all signifies Truthfulness, Purity and humility.

In each legend, myth and story of Diwali lies the significance of the victory of good over evil; and it is with each Diwali and the lights that illuminate our homes and hearts, that this simple truth finds new reason and hope. From darkness unto light — the light that empowers us to commit ourselves to good deeds, that which brings us closer to divinity. During Diwali, lights illuminate every corner of India and the scent of incense sticks hangs in the air, mingled with the sounds of fire-crackers, joy, togetherness and hope. If you are away from the sights and sounds of Diwali, light a *diya*, sit quietly, shut your eyes, withdraw the senses, concentrate on this supreme light and illuminate the soul.

- VINAY YADAV(7th Grade)

## "When the mind is defeated"

Diwali is an important celebration in the Indian tradition. Most people believe Diwali is celebrated for Ram's return to Ahyodia after 14 years of exile. Not only did Ram finally come back but he also defeated the great demon Ravan. Another meaning of Diwali is when the soul comes back to god and the mind is defeated. That is when the lights are lit inside. To make your soul get back to god you have to meditate and let your light be lit within.

- JAY AHUJA(7th Grade)

## "Diya's and Deepak's"

Diwali's true meaning is victory of good over the evil. It leads us into Truth and Light. Diwali celebrates Lord Rama's homecoming after the defeat of demon Ravana. In some parts of India this festival honors Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. Bengal people honors Maa kali. Everywhere, it signifies the renewal of life, and accordingly it is common to wear new clothes on the day of the festival. The best part of this festival is people exchange sweets and enjoy fireworks. Deepavali means rows of diyas (lamps).

On Diwali people light small deepaks (oil lamps) and place them around the home. Lighting a lamp symbolizes the destruction of all negative forces- wickedness, violence, lust, anger, envy, greed, fear, injustice and suffering. Deepavali is a festival where people from all age groups participate. I like this festival. On this day my Mom cleans the whole house and put lights all around the house and then in evening we all together do Ganesh And Laxmi pooja.—Happy Diwali to all of you.

-RAHUL THAWANI ( 2nd Grade)

## Why some people celebrate

People call Diwali the festival of light because lights symbolize peace and Happiness. Diwali is celebrated because Ram came back after defeating the evil king of Lanka Ravan. Ram was the prince of Ayodhya and the son of King Dashrath. Ram went to the forest because his step mom Kekai ordered him to live in the forest for 14 years.

Ravan was the very intelligent and extremely powerful king, he was also known as Dasaanan which means bearer of ten heads. Lankesh Ravan wanted to marry Sita and went to her Swamvar (groom selection ceremony). But he could not tie the bowstring on lord Shiva's charismatic bow. Ram was able to tie the bowstring and got Sita as his wife. Because of this event Ravan decided to take revenge from Ram and Sita. Ravan kidnapped Sita while they were living in the forest. To bring Sita back home from Lanka, Ram with the help of his brother Laxman and monkey king Sugreev and Hanuman attacked Lanka. The Ram and Ravan war was very violent and between the good and evil.

Finally Ram defeated Ravan and came home with Seeta and Laxman on the day of Diwali. Because of his return the people of Ayodhya and whole country celebrated the day with lighting fire works. Diwali is also celebrated because God Mahavir attained nirvana or Moksha on this day. In India people start preparing for this festival from months ahead, they thoroughly clean their houses, shops and offices. They white wash and paint their houses. Decoration is really amazing and worth seeing during this time. People of India think that if they welcome the Diwali festival it brings lots of good luck and prosperity to their families.

Diwali is celebrated 5 days in India. Just the day before Diwali its called Dhanteras this day is considered very lucky to buy the precious gold and silver jewelries .On the day of Diwali Laxmi pujan is done in the evening and then people greet each other. fire works is amazing on this day you can see and hear fire crackers light and sound all around. Every one is dressed up in new and fancy dresses. Specially childerens are very excited and look forward to this day.

—**SAMYAK BADKUL (4th Grade)**

## “Rejoicing and Celebration”

Diwali is the festival that is the return of Lord Rama. Lord Rama was just about to be crowned king when he is sent to the forest for 14 years. He is accompanied by his wife and younger brother. In the forest Sita was kidnapped by Ravana. Then lord Rama has to go save Sita. He and his new companion hanuman save Sita and then Hanuman, Rama, Sita, and Laxmana return to the city of Ayodhya. Then the city celebrates that their new king is back. That is why we celebrate Diwali.

- **RUCHI GOYAL (5th Grade)**

## Festival of Lights

Diwali, also known as the Festival of Lights, is a traditional festival of the Hindus that is looked forward to by people around the world who celebrate it throughout the year. According to Hindu mythology, when Lord Ram returned home after fourteen years of exile and after rescuing his wife Sita from the evil Ravana, king of Lanka, the people of Ayodhya were filled with joy and they all lit several earthen lamps in their houses to display their happiness and welcome home their beloved king.

Thus, this joyous festival marks the victory of the righteousness over evil, and the lifting of the soul from darkness into spiritual light, hence the name the Festival of Lights. The tradition of lighting lamps has been carried over to this day and additionally, the lighting of lamps, and the use of colored electric lights to decorate houses has also become widespread in the modern times.

Women also decorate their houses with beautiful *rangolis* or designs drawn on the floor with colored powder or flowers after the whole house has been thoroughly cleaned and whitewashed. The kitchen is one of the busiest places during the time of Diwali as numerous mouthwatering sweets and other delicacies are prepared for the family and for the many guests that visit during this time. One of the busiest times of the year in the marketplace,

Diwali is the perfect time for people to buy new clothes and other things for their home as it is even customary to buy new vessels on the day of *Dhantares*, which is held two days before Diwali. While there are such endless preparations that go into Diwali, on the actual day of the festival, families worship Goddess Laxmi, the Goddess of Wealth, and Lord Ganesh, the Bringer of Well-Being for the Hindus, for their family's wellness and prosperity, and making it an auspicious time for new business to be started. In the evening, families and friends together feast on sumptuous food and spend a festive and merry time together.

In India, and other places where it is allowed to do so, all the kids and even adults in every neighborhood burst fire crackers with great excitement and enthusiasm. Diwali is a most colorful, beautiful and most looked-forward-to festival of the Hindus because of the great joys and festivities involved but the element that makes all this possible is the love that binds the whole family and friends to each other together. Thus, Diwali is a time when family and friends gather together to celebrate their love with the consumption of extravagant food and by seeking the blessings of God for the new year to come.

**Here's wishing to everybody a very Happy, Auspicious, and Colorful Diwali!!**

**-DIVYA BHANDOLA**



Science of Spirituality  
— Kansas Sangat

Wishes Everyone

Happy Diwali

