

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 future generations that in the constant 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. In the words of Sriranga Sadguru, a yogi-seer, "The planetary positions are favorable to spiritual development on these festivals and one should make use of these special timings"

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 (through His Sudarshana chakra) the demon Narakasura and free the prisoners. Thus *Deepavali* is to celebrate the glory of Lord Krishna (Supreme Light) and the end of tyranny (darkness. The lighting of lamps spiritually signify removal of one's 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, on the next day to *Deepavali* as part of the festival the King Bali is also worshipped. The King Bali gave his entire kingdom and surrendered himself by requesting the Lord Vishnu (as Vamana) to place His (Lord's) foot on his (King Bali's) head. In some places, Rama's return to Ayodhya after killing demon Ravana is celebrated

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