



CV Hindu Cultural Society Information Sheet



The Five Days of Diwali



1. Dhanteras

Dhanteras falls two days before Diwali. The word "**Dhan**" means wealth. On this day, houses and business premises are renovated and decorated. Entrances are made colorful with lovely traditional motifs of Rangoli designs to welcome the Goddess of wealth and prosperity. To indicate her long-awaited arrival, small footprints are drawn with rice flour and vermilion powder all over the houses. Lamps are kept burning all through the nights.

Believing this day to be auspicious women purchase some gold or silver or at least one or two new utensils. New Dhan or some form of precious metal is bought as a sign of good luck. "**Lakshmi-Pooja**" is performed in the evenings when tiny Diyas of clay are lighted to drive away the shadows of evil spirits. "**Bhajans**"-devotional songs- in praise of Goddess Lakshmi are sung.

2. Chhoti Diwali / Naraka Chaturdasi

The day before Diwali is celebrated as **Choti Diwali / Narak Chaturdasi** or 'small Diwali'. It is Diwali on a smaller scale, with fewer lights lit and fewer crackers burst. The morning after Choti Diwali, the women of the house make beautiful, coloured **rangoli** in the doorway and courtyard. Tiny footprints made out of rice paste are a special feature of the rangolis made for Diwali. In Hindu homes, Choti Diwali celebrations involve a ritual pooja to **Lakshmi** and also to **Rama** in the evening. Songs in honor of the god are sung and **aarti** is performed.



3. Lakshmi Pooja or Diwali

This is the day when worship unto Mother Lakshmi is performed. Hindus cleanse themselves and join with their families and their Pandit (priest) and worship the divine Goddess Lakshmi to achieve the blessings of wealth and prosperity, the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. 'Rangoli' patterns are placed at the entrance to welcome Lakshmi Maa, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity.

Diwali also forms the last day of the Hindu financial year. It is a time when traditional Hindu businessmen carry out their end of year accounts. They perform the chopda poojan at their respective business premises to invoke goddess Lakshmi. The evening is dedicated to Lakshmi Pooja which finishes with the chanting of bhajans. Extensive firework displays are also planned for the end of this day to mark the auspicious occasion of Diwali.

Kali Pooja

The image of Kali usually shows her foot on Lord Shiva's chest, a severed head in one hand, her sword in the other, and wearing a garland of skulls. Kali is worshipped as the Mother Goddess who protects from evil. She also epitomizes strength or 'Shakti' and the darker side of life. The actual pooja takes place at midnight on the day of the new moon. One of the main festivals of the Bengalis, the Durga Pooja ends with a somber tone. But soon, this melancholy slowly disappears with the arrival of Lakshmi Pooja in between to finally the tri-festival of the Bengalis - Kali Pooja on Diwali night.



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Balindra Pooja

Diwali is also known as Balindra Pooja in many South Indian States. First the pooja is offered to water. Next morning at moon rise, a pooja offering oil to Krishna is performed. On the New Moon day, Pooja is offered to the image of Bali, which is artistically drawn on the ground in front of the gopuram. This is a popular pooja done in the household of most of the South Indian states including Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. On the next day pooja is offered to the cows after they are washed, decorated and fed with special sweets etc. Then, the cows are taken in a procession. A Balindra is molded out of cow dung in a square shape. Shavanthi flowers are stuck on to it. This is worshiped as Balindra. A large number of wick lamps are lighted on this occasion.



4. Padwa & Govardhan Pooja

The day following the Amavasya is "**Kartik Shuddh Padwa**" and it is only on this day that the King Bali would come out of Pathal Loka and rule Bhulok as per the boon given by Lord Vishnu. Hence, it is also known as "**Bali Padyami**". This day also marks the coronation of **King Vikramaditya** and Vikaram-Samvat was started from this Padwa day. **Gudi Padwa** is symbolic of love and devotion between the wife and husband. On this day newly-married daughters with their husbands are invited for special meals and given presents. In olden days brothers went to fetch their sisters from their in-laws home for this important day.

Govardhan-Pooja, is also performed in the North on this day. Govardhan is a small hillock in Braj, near Mathura and on this day of Diwali people of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar build cowdung, hillocks, decorate them with flowers and then worship them. This festival is in commemoration of the lifting of **Mount Govardhan** by Krishna. As per Vishnu-Puran the people of Gokul used to celebrate a festival in honor of Lord Indra and worshiped him after the end of every monsoon season but one particular year the young Krishna stopped them from offering prayers to **Lord Indra** who in terrific anger sent a deluge to submerge Gokul.

This day is also observed as **Annakoot** meaning mountain of food. Pious people keep awake the whole night and cook fifty-six or 108 different types of food for the bhog (the offering of food) to Krishna. In temples specially in Mathura and Nathadwara, the deities are given milkbath, dressed in shining attires with ornaments of dazzling diamonds, pearls, rubies and other precious stones. After the prayers and traditional worship innumerable varieties of delicious sweets are ceremoniously raised in the form of a mountain before the deities as "**Bhog**" and then the devotees approach the Mountain of Food and take Prasad from it.

5. Bhai Duj

The fifth day of Deepavali or Diwali is celebrated as Bhaiya Dooj, popularly know as Bhai Dooj. The name itself denotes the day of the festival i.e it falls on Dooj, the second day after the new moon. This day Yamaraj went to his sister's house who put an auspicious mark on his forehead for his welfare. Thus, on this day sisters perform pooja for their brothers safety and well being. Brothers in return give gifts to their sisters as a token of love.



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