



Diwali, or Dipawali, is India's biggest and most important holiday of the year. The festival gets its name from the row (awali) of clay lamps (deepa) that Indians light outside their homes to symbolize the inner light that protects from spiritual darkness. This festival is as important to Hindus as the Christmas holiday is to Christians.

Over the centuries, Diwali has become a national festival that is enjoyed by most Indians regardless of faith: Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs. Hindus interpret the Diwali story based upon where they live:

- In northern India they celebrate the story of King Rama's return to Ayodhya after he defeated Ravana by lighting rows of clay lamps.
- Southern India celebrates it as the day that Lord Krishna defeated the demon Narakasura.
- In western India the festival marks the day that Lord Vishnu, the Preserver (one of the main gods of the Hindu trinity) sent the demon King Bali to rule the nether world.

**In all interpretations, one common thread rings true-  
The festival marks the victory of good over evil.**

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/diwali>

## Mythological stories about Diwali festival

**Day 1:** Dhanteras is the thirteenth lunar day of Krishna Paksh. On this day Goddess Dhanvantari, the originator of Ayurveda, is worshipped. It is said that, it is on this day when the Goddess emerged carrying a jar of elixir when the Gods and the Demons churned the ocean for Amrit (nectar).

Another story about the significance of this day goes like this: According to an ancient legend, it was predicted that King Hima's 16-year-old son would die of a snake bite on the fourteenth day of his marriage. On that day, his newly wedded wife took out all her gold and silver ornaments and coins and placed them along with the diyas outside her husband's room. She sang songs the entire night to keep her husband awake. When the God of Death, Lord Yama, disguised as a serpent came near the room, he was blinded by the lamps and the dazzle of the jewellery. He then climbed up the heap and heard the songs the entire night. He went away in the morning without taking the young prince with him.

The diyas on Dhanteras are kept lit the entire night as a sign of respect and prayer to Lord Yama.

**Day 2:** Naraka Chaturdasi also known as Roop Chaudas or Choti Diwali is the fourteenth lunar day of Krishna Paksh. Naraka Chaturdasi marks the victory of Lord Krishna over the demon – Narakasur. On this day, the atmosphere at home is kept fresh by using fragrant oils and flowers.

**Day 3:** Lakshmi Pooja is the most important day of the festival of Diwali. It is believed that Lord Vishnu's wife, Goddess Lakshmi roams the planet on this day to shower prosperity and wealth on her devotees. To welcome the Goddess and to



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keep her happy, devotees perform Lakshmi Pooja and keep diyas in all corners of the house. Doors of the house are kept open for the Goddess and it is made sure that there's no filth in the house.

Also, it is on this day that Lord Rama returned to Ayodhya, rescuing Goddess Sita after defeating Ravana. Celebrations on this day symbolize the victory of good over evil.

**Day 4:** Govardhan Pooja marks the worship of the sacred Govardhan mountain.

According to Bhagvata Purana, people near Govardhan mountain in Braj used to celebrate the autumn season by paying respect to the God of rain and storm – Lord Indra. Lord Krishna was of the view that instead of praying to the distant Gods people should worship and revere the God in front of them. He started a festival wherein people would put food and other offerings at the Govardhan mountain. Krishna then assumed the form of a mountain himself and accepted the villagers' offerings. Lord Indra angry at the villager's devotion towards Lord Krishna tried to submerge the place with the help of torrential rains and storm. Lord Krishna then lifted the Govardhan mountain on his pinky finger to give the villagers the shelter from the storm and rains. The incident symbolizes as to how God will protect all devotees who take refuge in him.

**Day 5:** Bhai Dooj is the last and the fifth day of the Diwali festival. According to a legend, it is on this day when Lord Yama paid a visit to his sister, Yamuna after many years. Elated with his brother's visit, Yamuna welcomed her brother by applying tilak on his forehead and preparing a great feast in his honor. As a gift to her, Lord Yama according to her sister's wish declared that brothers should visit their sister on his day and if

a sister applies tilak on her brother's forehead on this day, her brother will be safe from any harm.

Another legend has it that, on this day when after killing the demon king – Narakasur, Lord Krishna went to meet his sister Subhadra, she welcomed him by applying a tilak on his forehead to welcome him home.

The essence of Bhai Dooj is to celebrate the sacred bond between a brother and a sister and to strengthen their bond even more!

