

#### What is Diwali?

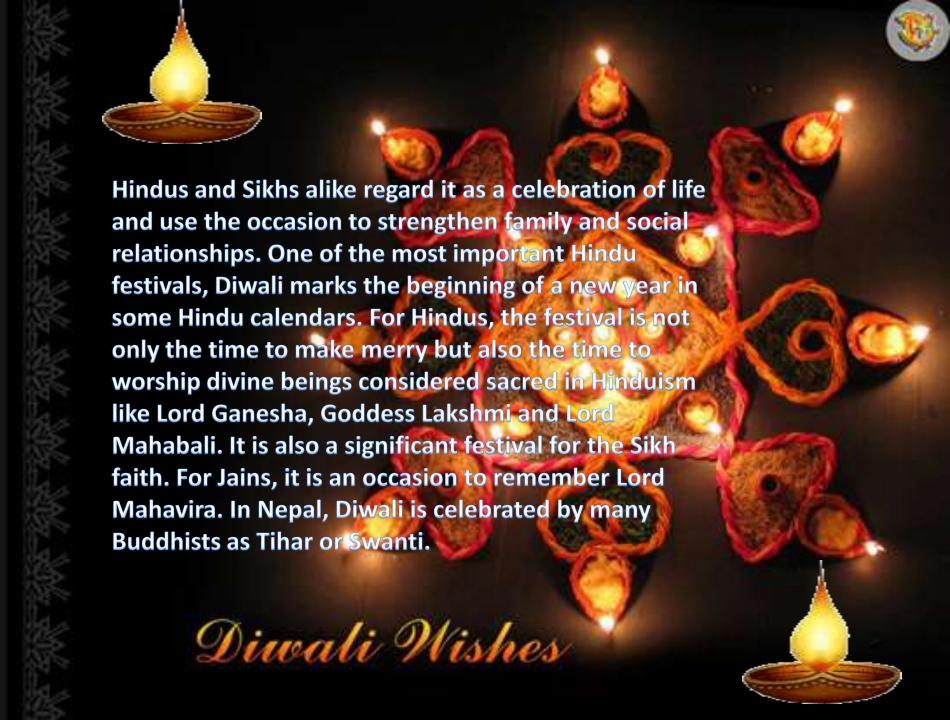
Diwali, or Deepavali, is one of the biggest Indian festivals and also a major occasion in Nepal. The festival has great religious significance for Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and the Nepalese. In India, Diwali is now considered to be more of a national festival, and is enjoyed by most Indians regardless of faith. It is commonly celebrated by decorating homes with lamps and candles, bursting of firecrackers and sparklers, eating sweets and other mouthwatering dishes, praying to Gods and Goddesses, observing religious rituals, wearing new dresses and sending wishes and gifts to one

# Diwali in history

The history of Diwali is replete with legends and these legends are moored to the stories of Hindu religious scriptures, mostly the Puranas. Though the central theme of all legends point out to the classic truth of the victory of the good over the evils, the mode of their presentation and the characters differ. Diwali, being the festival of lights, lighting the lamp of knowledge within us means to understand and reflect upon the significant purpose of each of the five days of festivities and to bring those thoughts in to the day to day lives.

#### What does Diwali mean?

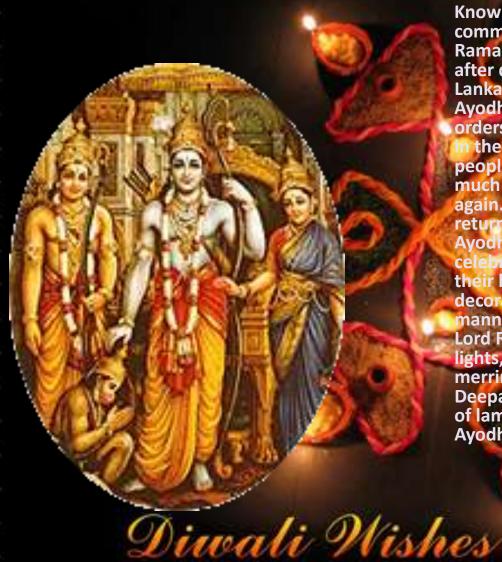
The word "Divali/Diwali" is a variation of the Sanskrit word "Deepavali" which means "a continuous line of lamps" (The word 'Deep' means "light", and 'avali' means "a continuous line"). Thus, Diwali is the time to celebrate with lights.



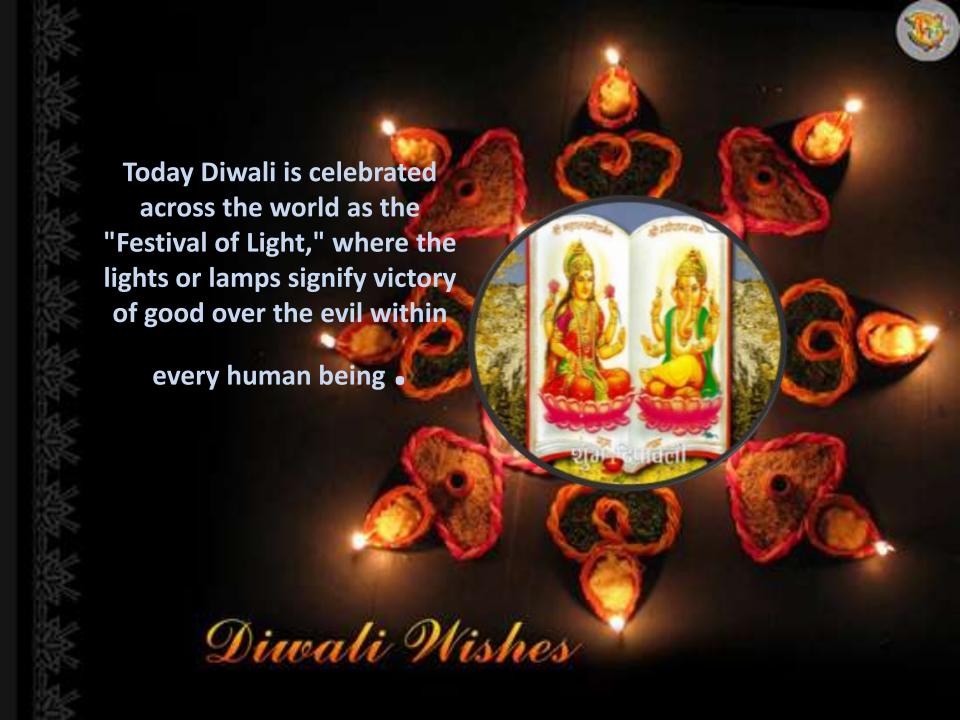
#### Why is Diwali called the "Festival of Lights"?

Diwali is known as the "Festival of Lights". This is probably because of the manner in which it is observed. The festival is traditionally celebrated with activities like bursting crackers, lighting rows of candles and diyas (earthen lamps) around individual homes, holding dazzling fireworks display and igniting colorful sparklers.

### What happened during Diwali?



Known as the "Festival of Lights," Diwali commemorates the time when the Lord Rama returned to his hometown Ayodhya after defeating the evil demon king of Lanka, Ravana. Lord Rama was the king of Ayodhya who had, by his father's orders, went away from his country to live the forest for fourteen years. But the people of Ayodhya loved their king very much and waited for years to meet with him again. And so, when news of Lord Rama's return came to them again, the people of Ayodhya, in the honor of their king and to celebrate his victory, burst crackers, lit up their houses with earthen lamps (diyas), and decorated the entire city in the grandest manner. Year after year this homecoming of Lord Rama is commemorated on Diwali with lights, fire works, bursting of cracker sand merriment. The festival gets its name Deepavali, or Diwali, from the rows (avail) of lamps (deepa) that the people of Ayodhya lit to welcome their King.



## Deepavali Celebrations

The festival of Diwali reminds us of the festive season of joy, splendor, enthusiasm and happiness. It is the festival of lights and is celebrated with great excitement by all Indians all over the world. The uniqueness of the festival is that it is celebrated for five days and each of the days has a special significance and importance. Each of the five days is based of five varied philosophies, with each day to a special thought or ideal. The first day of Diwali is called the Dhanteras, Dhanwantari Triodasi or Dhantryaodashi, which falls on the thirteenth day of the month of Ashwin. On this day, Lord Dhanwantari came out of the ocean with Ayurveda for mankind. This day marks the beginning of Diwali celebrations. On this day at sunset offerings are made of sweets during worship time to Lord Yama (the Lord of Death) for the protection from untimely death. It is mainly done near a Tulsitree (basil tree) or any other sacred tree.



