

# Diwali

## What Is Diwali?

Diwali is an important festival celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs and Jains and is often called the 'festival of lights'. It is one of the happiest holidays in India. The word Diwali comes from the old Sanskrit word Deepavali, which means 'rows of lights'.

Diwali dates back to ancient times in India. It was a festival after the summer harvest in the Hindu calendar month of Kartika. Due to the importance of the new moon, its date varies but it always falls sometime in October or November.



## What Is the Meaning of Diwali?

The festival celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.

The legends that go with the festival differ depending on where you are:

- In northern India, Diwali celebrates Rama and Sita's return to their home after they were banished by the king. Sita is the human form of Lakshmi and Rama is the human form of Vishnu.
- In Nepal, Diwali commemorates the victory of Lord Krishna over the demon king, Narakasura.
- In Bengal, it is associated with the goddess Kali.

## What Happens during Diwali?

Depending on where it is being celebrated, Diwali takes place over three or five days. Different events happen on different days as explained below.

### Day 1: Dhanteras

People clean and decorate the house, preparing for the arrival of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. They also create Rangoli patterns on the floor or wall using brightly-coloured powders. The word Rangoli is Sanskrit for 'row of colours'. They are meant as a sign of welcome into a shop or home but were traditionally used to welcome Lakshmi. They might include symbols, such as the sun, moon or stars, but the most popular pattern is the lotus flower.



## Day 2: Naraka Chaturdashi

Sweets and other delicious foods are prepared. People go shopping to buy new outfits. Some people will bathe in perfumed hot oils and others will decorate their hands with beautiful henna patterns.

## Day 3: Diwali (The Main Festival Day)

On this day, people will usually dress in their new outfits and perform a puja or ritual for Lakshmi to show her respect. They do this in the hope of being blessed with a comfortable life. Windows and doors are often left open in preparation for Lakshmi's arrival and Diya lamps are lit to show her the way into homes in the darkness.



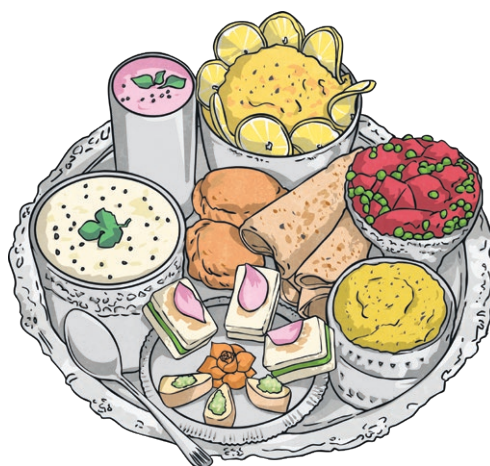
In the evening, friends and family visit each other to share a feast before swapping gifts (mainly sweets and chocolates but also new clothes and accessories). Diwali is not complete without fireworks! It is believed that the loud bangs will keep evil spirits away and allow Lakshmi to arrive safely.

## Day 4: Padwa

On a day similar to an anniversary, married couples show their love for each other by exchanging gifts. If you really want to treat someone, you might buy them something made of gold.

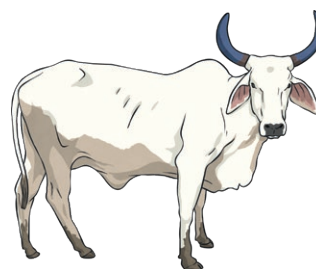
## Day 5: Bhai Dooj

On this day, the bond between brothers and sisters is celebrated with the sharing of feasts and more gifts.



### Did You Know...?

Many Hindus believe that Lakshmi lives on Earth in every cow so this is why they worship cows. It is common to see cows painted with different colours or patterns. They might also be offered flower garlands to wear.



# Questions

1. **In Nepal, Diwali commemorates the victory of Lord Krishna over the demon king, Narakasura.**

Which word is closest in meaning to **commemorates**? Tick **one**.

- ☐ ignores  
☐ forgets  
☐ remembers  
☐ neglects

2. Match the day of the festival to the correct name.

Day 1	Diwali
Day 3	Dhanteras
Day 5	Bhai Dooj

3. Fill in the missing words from this sentence:

On Day \_\_ (Naraka Chaturdashi), we spent the morning making \_\_\_\_\_ and other delicious foods before going \_\_\_\_\_ to buy new outfits.

4. Where is Diwali linked to the goddess Kali?

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5. Find and copy a word or phrase from the second section which tells you that Rama and Sita were sent away.

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6. Why are Rangoli patterns important?

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7. Why is Diwali called the 'festival of lights'? Give two reasons.

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8. Which day of the festival would you prefer? Explain your answer.

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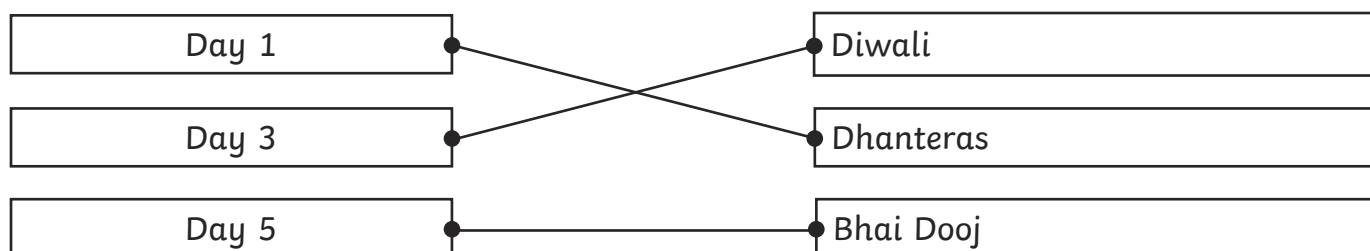
# Answers

1. **In Nepal, Diwali commemorates the victory of Lord Krishna over the demon king, Narakasura.**

Which word is closest in meaning to **commemorates**? Tick **one**.

- ☐ ignores  
☐ forgets  
☒ **remembers**  
☐ neglects

2. Match the day of the festival to the correct name.



3. Fill in the missing words from this sentence:

On Day **2** (Naraka Chaturdashi), we spent the morning making **sweets** and other delicious foods before going **shopping** to buy new outfits.

4. Where is Diwali linked to the goddess Kali?

**Diwali is linked to the goddess Kali in Bengal.**

5. Find and copy a word or phrase from the second section which tells you that Rama and Sita were sent away.

**banished**

6. Why are Rangoli patterns important?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Rangoli patterns are important because they welcome visitors into people's homes and they symbolise welcoming Lakshmi.**

7. Why is Diwali called the 'festival of lights'? Give two reasons.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Diwali is called the 'festival of lights' because it is celebrating the victory of light over darkness and light symbolises good. The lights (Diya lamps) are used to welcome Lakshmi into people's homes.**

8. Which day of the festival would you prefer? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would prefer Day 3 (the main day of Diwali) because I'd enjoy the feast and the fireworks.**



# Diwali

## What Is Diwali?

One of the happiest holidays celebrated in India and around the world is Diwali (often called the 'festival of lights') and it is an important festival for Hindus, Sikhs and Jains. The word Diwali comes from the ancient Sanskrit word Deepavali, which means 'rows of lights', and the festival celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.

The legends that go with the festival differ depending on where you are:

- In northern India, Diwali celebrates Rama and Sita's return from **exile** after they were banished by the king. Rama and Sita are the human forms of Vishnu, the god of protection, and Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.
- In Nepal, Diwali commemorates the victory of Lord Krishna, the god of love, over the demon king, Narakasura.
- In Bengal, it is associated with the goddess Kali, the goddess of time.



In India, Diwali dates back to ancient times as a festival after the summer harvest in the Hindu calendar month of Kartika. Due to the importance of the festival falling on a **new moon**, its date varies but it always occurs in autumn (in the northern hemisphere) and spring (in the southern hemisphere). This makes it sometime in October or November. Depending on where it is being celebrated, Diwali takes place over three or five days with a variety of different events happening on different days. Read the following diary to find out more about why Diwali is popular with children.

## Day 1: Dhanteras

Today, we cleaned and decorated the house to prepare for the arrival of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. We also created decorative Rangoli patterns with brightly-coloured powder by the door to welcome visitors. The word Rangoli is Sanskrit for 'row of colours' and ours included symbols of the sun, moon and stars, although the most popular pattern is the lotus flower.



## Day 2: Naraka Chaturdashi

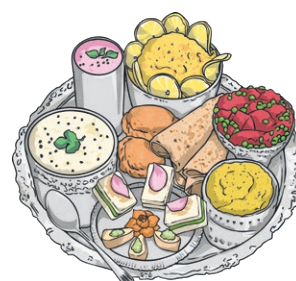
We spent the morning making sweets and other delicious foods before going shopping to buy new outfits and gifts – shopping and gifts are important parts of Diwali. Then, after a bath in perfumed hot oils, our hands were adorned with beautiful henna patterns.



## Day 3: Diwali (The Main Festival Day)

On this day, we wore our new outfits to look our best for the arrival of Lakshmi, who we performed a special puja (ritual) for. The windows and doors were thrown open in preparation for her arrival that night and the Diya lamps were lit to show her the way into our home in the total darkness.

In the evening, we welcomed friends and family into our home where we shared a feast before swapping gifts (mainly sweets and chocolates but I was lucky enough to be given some new clothes and accessories). Finally, it was time for the fireworks! We believe that the loud bangs will keep evil spirits away and allow Lakshmi to come in safety.



## Day 4: Padwa

Today, on a day similar to an anniversary, my parents showed their love for each other by exchanging gifts. My father really wanted to treat my mother so he bought her a new gold necklace!

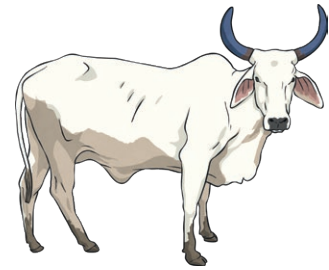
## Day 5: Bhai Dooj

Today is always my favourite day of the Diwali celebration because my mother and I prepare a feast for my brother, who also treats me all day. This year he gave me more gifts, including my favourite Indian sweets.



**Did You Know...?**

Many Hindus believe that Lakshmi lives on Earth in every cow so this is why they worship cows. It is common to see cows painted with different colours or patterns and they might also be offered flower garlands to wear.

**Glossary**

**exile:** Being barred from one's native country.

**new moon:** The time when the Moon is not visible from the Earth.

# Questions

1. Which words describe Diwali? Tick **two**.

- ☐ happy
- ☐ sad
- ☐ ancient
- ☐ modern

2. Match the gods/goddesses to their title.

Lakshmi

goddess of time

Krishna

goddess of wealth

Kali

god of love

3. Find and copy two words which tell you that Rama and Sita were sent away.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. Give two things that people do on Naraka Chaturdashi.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

5. Who celebrates Diwali?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

6. Why are Diya lamps important?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Why do you think that Diwali is popular with children? Give two reasons.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Why do you think that people want to welcome Lakshmi into their homes?

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9. Why is Diwali one of the happiest holidays celebrated in India?

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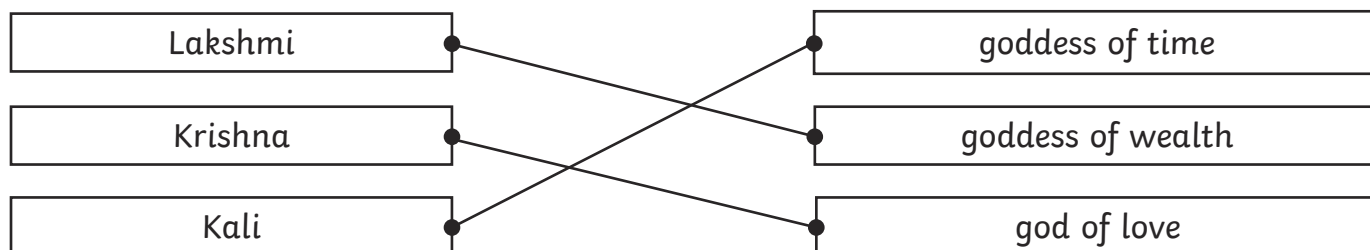
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# Answers

1. Which words describe Diwali? Tick **two**.

- ☒ **happy**
- ☐ sad
- ☒ **ancient**
- ☐ modern

2. Match the gods/goddesses to their title.



3. Find and copy two words which tell you that Rama and Sita were sent away.

- **exile**
- **banished**

4. Give two things that people do on Naraka Chaturdashi.

**Accept any two of the following: prepare sweets and other delicious foods; go shopping to buy new outfits; bathe in perfumed hot oils; decorate their hands with beautiful henna patterns.**

5. Who celebrates Diwali?

**Accept all three of the following: Hindus; Sikhs; Jains.**

6. Why are Diya lamps important?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Diya lamps are important because they symbolise lighting the way for Lakshmi to enter people's homes.**

7. Why do you think that Diwali is popular with children? Give two reasons.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Diwali is popular with children because it is a happy time when lots of scrumptious sweets are given as gifts; children also find fireworks exciting when they light up the sky.**

8. Why do you think that people want to welcome Lakshmi into their homes?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: People want to welcome Lakshmi into their homes because she is the goddess of wealth so she might bring them money or good fortune.**

9. Why is Diwali one of the happiest holidays celebrated in India?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Diwali is a celebration of good with many fun and exciting events happening to celebrate the arrival of Lakshmi.**



# Diwali

## What Is Diwali?

One of the most important festivals for Hindus, Sikhs and Jains is the jubilant holiday of Diwali (often called the 'festival of lights'). It is celebrated both in India and internationally. Originally celebrated in ancient India, the word Diwali comes from the Sanskrit word Deepavali, which means 'rows of lights', and the festival celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.



## What Is the Meaning of Diwali?

The legends that accompany the festival differ depending on where you are. In northern India, Diwali celebrates Rama and Sita's return from exile (being barred from one's native country) after they were banished by the king. Rama and Sita are the human forms of Vishnu, the god of protection, and Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. In Nepal, Diwali commemorates the victory of Lord Krishna, the god of love, over the demon king, Narakasura, whereas in Bengal, it is associated with the goddess Kali, the goddess of time.

## What Happens during Diwali?

The origins of Diwali are therefore varied depending on where you celebrate but it has always been linked to the new moon (the time when the Moon is not visible from the Earth). This is during the Hindu calendar month of Kartika and is a festival after the summer harvest. Due to this, its date varies but it always occurs in autumn (in the northern hemisphere) and spring (in the southern hemisphere). This puts it sometime in October or November. Depending on where it is being celebrated, Diwali takes place over three or five days with a variety of different events happening on different days. To find out more about why children love Diwali, read the following diary.

### Day 1: Dhanteras

After cleaning and decorating the house to prepare for the arrival of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, we spent time creating intricate Rangoli patterns with brightly-coloured powder by the door to welcome visitors. The word Rangoli comes from the ancient Sanskrit word for 'row of colours' and our patterns included symbols of the sun, moon and stars although the most popular usually contain lotus flowers.



## Day 2: Naraka Chaturdashi

Before we could go shopping to buy new outfits, we had to spend the morning making sweets and other delicious foods – the smell in the house was mouth-watering! Then, after a bath in perfumed hot oils, our hands were adorned with beautiful henna patterns.



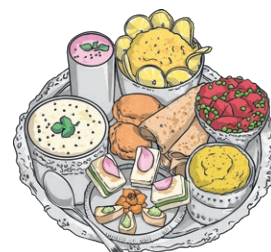
## Day 3: Diwali

This is the main day of the festival when Lakshmi arrives; we wore our new outfits to look our best. We wore these while we performed a special puja (ritual) for Lakshmi to ask her to provide us with everything we need for a comfortable life. The windows and doors were thrown open in preparation for her arrival that night and the Diya lamps were lit to show her the way into our home in the total darkness.

In the evening, we welcomed friends and family into our home where we shared a feast before swapping gifts. The gifts were mainly sweets and chocolates but I was lucky enough to be given some new clothes and accessories. Finally, it was time for the fireworks! We believe that the loud bangs will keep evil spirits away and allow Lakshmi to arrive in safety.

## Day 4: Padwa

Today, on a day similar to an anniversary, my parents showed their love for each other by exchanging gifts. My father really wanted to treat my mother so he bought her a beautiful new gold necklace!



## Day 5: Bhai Dooj

Today is always my favourite day of the Diwali celebration because my mother and I prepare a feast for my brother. He treats me all day; this year he gave me more gifts, including scrumptious Indian sweets.

### Did You Know...?

Due to the belief of many Hindus that Lakshmi lives on Earth in every cow, cows are worshipped. It is common to see cows painted with different colours or patterns and they might also be offered flower garlands similar to those used in the Lakshmi Puja.

# Questions

1. '...the **jubilant** holiday of Diwali is celebrated in India and around the world.'  
What does **jubilant** mean? Tick one.

- ☐ underwhelmed
- ☐ joyous
- ☐ downcast
- ☐ indifferent

2. What does Diwali celebrate? Tick one.

- ☐ The victory of good over evil.
- ☐ The victory of light over darkness.
- ☐ The victory of knowledge over ignorance.
- ☐ All of the above.

3. 'The **legends** that go with the festival differ depending on where you are.'  
What does **legends** mean?

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4. Give three things that people do on Day 3 (Diwali).

- ---
- ---
- ---

5. Find and copy a word from the text which shows that Diwali is celebrated around the world.

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6. Why are cows important during Diwali?

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7. Summarise what you have read in paragraph three in 30 words or less.

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8. How is light symbolic during Diwali?

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9. Why is it important for Lakshmi to arrive safely?

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10. Do you think that Diwali would be an enjoyable festival to attend? Give evidence to support your answer.

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# Answers

1. '...the **jubilant** holiday of Diwali is celebrated in India and around the world.'  
What does **jubilant** mean? Tick one.

- ☐ underwhelmed  
☒ **joyous**  
☐ downcast  
☐ indifferent

2. What does Diwali celebrate? Tick one.

- ☐ The victory of good over evil.  
☐ The victory of light over darkness.  
☐ The victory of knowledge over ignorance.  
☒ **All of the above**

3. 'The **legends** that go with the festival differ depending on where you are.'  
What does **legends** mean?

**Legends are traditional stories popularly taken to be true by certain groups of people.**

4. Give three things that people do on Day 3 (Diwali).

**Accept any three of the following: wear new outfits; perform a puja (ritual) to Lakshmi; open windows and doors; light Diya lamps; welcome family and friends; share a feast; swap gifts; watch/let off fireworks.**

5. Find and copy a word from the text which shows that Diwali is celebrated around the world.

**internationally**

6. Why are cows important during Diwali?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Cows are important during Diwali because they believe that Lakshmi lives on Earth in every cow so they are worshipped, too.**

7. Summarise what you have read in paragraph three in 30 words or less.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Diwali is linked to the new moon during Kartika so, although its date varies, it will always fall during October or November and take place for three to five days.**



8. How is light symbolic during Diwali?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Light is symbolic of good things during Diwali because Diwali celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.**

9. Why is it important for Lakshmi to arrive safely?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: It is important for Lakshmi to arrive safely because people believe that she is the goddess of wealth who can bring them good fortune and everything for a comfortable life.**

10. Do you think that Diwali would be an enjoyable festival to attend? Give evidence to support your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that Diwali would be an enjoyable festival to attend because it sounds like there is lots of delicious food to eat and gifts to share. There are also colourful Rangoli patterns, bright Diya lamps and fireworks lighting up the dark sky which would be nice to see.**