

VED VANI- NOVEMBER 2013

FESTIVAL DELIGHT

India is a land of festivals and each day is sure to be celebrated in some part or the other as a holy day, a festival, a fast or a feast.

DHANTERAS



Dipawali is celebrated in the sandhi (fusion) period of Ashwin (Asvij) and Kartika. It is celebrated from the 13th day of the dark half of Ashwin month to the 1st day of the bright half of the Kartika month. It is basically a five day celebration. The first day is celebrated as Dhanteras otherwise known as Dhanatrayodashi- This festival is also known as Dhanaterasa. 'Dhana' in the title is 'wealth' and 'trayodashi' or 'terasa' means 'the 13th day'. It is celebrated on the 13th day of the second half of the Ashwin month. On this day, a lamp is lit in the evening and people worship gold, wealth, jewelry along with the deities symbolic of bestowing wealth and prosperity in life. Hence Lakshmi, Vishnu and Kubera are worshipped on this day. This day is also regarded as the Jayanti (Birth Anniversary) of God Dhanvantari. He is the Physician of Gods who came out during Samudramanathan, the churning of the great ocean by the Gods and the demons. Hence the day is also known as Dhanvantariterasa.

1st Nov is celebrated as Dhanteras

DIWALI

The festival Dipawali or Diwali is the grandest of all Hindu festivals. It is the festival of lights, color, grandeur and prosperity. It is celebrated with great enthusiasm, not only in India but in all other countries where Indians have emigrated.



Dipawali is a five day Hindu festival which occurs on the fifteenth day of the month of Kartika, as per the Hindu Lunar Calendar. Dipawali is derived from 'dip' or 'deep' (light) and awali (a row), meaning 'row of lighted lamps' or 'Festival of Lights'. The festival is celebrated by lighting lamps and making the 'Amawasya' or 'waxing crescent' night as bright as possible.

During Dipawali, homes, stores, sidewalks and other public places are decorated with small clay oil lamps called diyas. Fire-crackers are burnt and big lamps called Akashadiwa are lit during the festival.

In the Hindu scriptures, a traditional lantern called Akashadiwa is given a special significance for acquiring prosperity. The lamp is considered as the symbol of knowledge. The illumination in the home with lamp lights is an expression of attainment of health, wealth, knowledge, peace and prosperity.

There are many legends behind the celebration of this festival and various colorful stories related to the rituals of Dipawali.

The festival celebrates Lord Rama's triumphant return to Ayodhya, along with Sita and Lakshmana, after his exile for fourteen year long years. Happiness, peace and harmony came back to Ayodhya. Celebrating this homecoming, the delighted subjects of Ayodhya decorated the city by lighting lamps symbolizing peace and prosperity. Yet another legend recalls the slaying of Narakasur by Lord Krishna who extracted a boon from the lord that the day would be celebrated with rejoicing by all Hindus.

Diwali is celebrated on 3 November 2013

GOVERDHAN PUJA

Vasubaras or Govatsa Dwadashi- The term Govatsa means 'Go' and 'vatsa', i.e. 'cow' and 'calf' respectively, in Sanskrit. Dwadashi means the 12th day of the month. This festival is celebrated on the 12th day of the second half of the Ashwin month. A Cow and a calf are worshipped on the evening of this day. If a cow and a calf are not available then people draw a picture of cow and calf and worship it. The day is also known as Vasubaras. In North India, this day is celebrated as Govardhana Puja which is also known as Annakoot. It is believed that on this day Lord Krishna defeated Indra by lifting Govardhana hill to save his kinsmen and cattle from rain and floods.

4 Nov is Goverdhan Puja

Diwali is also celebrated with many variations in each region of India.

In Tamil Nadu, **Naraka Chaturdashi** is celebrated on the 14th day of the second half of the Ashwin month. This was the day on which the evil demon Narakasura was killed by Lord Krishna. Before his death, Narakasura asked for a boon that the day of his destruction should be celebrated by all each passing year. Diwali is celebrated in memory of this episode.

Dipawali or Lakshmi Puja- Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped on the no moon day of Dipawali. **Bali Pratipada**- Bali Pratipada is celebrated on the 1st day of the first half of the Kartika month. It is celebrated in honor of King Bali. It is also celebrated as the first day of the Vikram Samvat calendar, in Gujarat. Hence all Gujaratis observe this day as the new-year celebration.

Diwali is also observed by various sects in India. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj died on Kartik Amawasya, the new moon day of Kartik, on 30th October 1883. Followers of Arya Samaj celebrate **Rishi Nirvanotsav** as his Death Anniversary on this day.

Dipawali has a very special significance in Jain religion too. Lord Mahavira, the last Jain Tirthankara, attained eternal bliss of Nirvana on **Kartika Chaturdashi** at Pavapuri on the new moon day of Dipawali. Sikhs celebrate this festival as

ChhorhDivis. The sixth guru of Sikh, Guru Hargobindji released 52 Hindu kings out of prison on this day. The festival is celebrated in honor of this event.

The Festival of Dipawali is thus celebrated with great enthusiasm all over India. It is a season of peace, prosperity, happiness and joy.

BHAI DHUJ



Yama Dwitiya or Bhai Dhuj is celebrated on the second day of first half of the month Kartika. On this day, siblings meet and express their love and affection for one another. The sister worships her brother and prays to God for his long life. It is said that Yama the Lord of Death, visited his sister Yami on this day.

Bahi Dhuj falls on 5 Nov

WANGALA FESTIVAL



This is a post harvest festival of Meghalaya dedicated to the sun god thanking him for the fertility of the land and the bountiful harvest. It is also known as the Hundred Drums Wangala Festival of the Garos. As is common with the tribesmen of the North East this too is a community festival and is

marked by dancing and celebrating together by beating a hundred drums.

This year Wangala Festival is celebrated on 7TH, 8TH AND 9TH NOVEMBER 2013.

GURU NANAK JAYANTI



Guru Nanak Sahib (the First Guru and founder of Sikhism) was born on 15th April, 1469 at Rai-Bhoi-di Talwandi in the present district of Shekhupura (Pakistan), now Nankana Sahib. The Birthday of Guru Nanak Sahib falls on Kartik Purnima i.e. full moon day of the month of Kartik. On this day the Birthday is celebrated every year. Sikhs from all over the world celebrate the Gurupurab every year with great devotion and enthusiasm.

Guru Nanak Jayanthi is observed on 17 November 2013

THE TREASURE CHEST- CHILDREN'S CORNER

Here is a list of some of the characters who appear in our Scriptures. Let us see how familiar you are with them.

Who am I?

1. I figure in the Mahabharat and am the only sister of the 100 Kauravas. Who am I? – **Dushaala.**
2. I am an important character in the Ramayana and I also appear in Mahabharat. – **Hanuman. He is present in the flagpost of Arjuna during the Great War.**
3. I was a highway robber but after being blessed by Sage Narad, I became the Adi Kavi and gave the world a great epic. – **Valmiki the author of Ramayana.**
4. I am the sister of Lord Krishna- **Subhadra**
5. I was kept in a pot by Sage Agastya but was released by Lord Ganesh- **Kaveri, the River.**
6. I dictated a great epic to Lord Ganesh who agreed to be the scribe. **Veda Vyasa.**

7. I introduced the concept of Zero to this world – **Aryabhata**
8. I am the first to be known as a surgeon in India- **Sushruta**
9. I shine as the Pole star in the sky- **Dhruva**
10. I am ancient India's most travelled sage and I travel singing Lord Hari's glory- **Narada**

For more such interesting information about our culture, heritage and religion please visit www.indianscriptures.com

VEDIC WISDOM BEHIND EATING WITH YOUR HANDS

Eating food with the hands in today's Western society can sometimes be perceived as being unhygienic, bad mannered and primitive. However within Indian culture there is an old saying that, "Eating food with your hands feeds not only the body but also the mind and the spirit".

In the Big Brother series some years back, an English participant complained about an Indian participant's use of her hands during food preparations and her eating habits, "They eat with their hands in India, don't they? Or is that China? You don't know where those hands have been." Within many Indian households nowadays, the practice of eating food with the hands has been replaced with the use of cutlery.

Have you ever thought of why previous generations in India ate with the hands? There is a reason for this. The practice of eating with the hands originated within Ayurvedic teachings. The Vedic people knew the power held in the hand. The ancient native tradition of eating food with the hands is derived from the mudra practice, which is prevalent in many aspects within Hinduism. Mudras are used during meditation and are very prominent within the many classical forms of dance, such as Bharatnatyam.

The hands are considered the most precious organ of action. This is linked to the Vedic prayer of "*Karagre vasate Laksmih karamule Sarasvati Karamadhye tu Govindah prabhate karadarsanam*" (On the tip of your fingers is Goddess Lakshmi, on the base of your fingers is Goddess Saraswati; in the middle of your fingers is Lord Govinda), which we recite whilst looking at our palms. Thus, this shloka suggests that all the divinity lies in human effort.

Our hands and feet are said to be the conduits of the five elements. The Ayurvedic texts teach that each finger is an extension of one of the five elements. The thumb is agni (fire) (you might have seen children sucking their thumb, this is nature's way of aiding the digestion in children at an age when they are unable to do a physical activity to aid the digestion), the forefinger is vayu (air), the middle finger is akash (ether - the tiny intercellular spaces in the human body), the ring finger is prithvi (earth) and the little finger is jal (water).

Each finger aids in the transformation of food, before it passes on to internal digestion. Gathering the fingertips as they touch the food stimulates the five elements and invites Agni to bring forth the digestive juices. As well as improving digestion the person becomes more conscious of the tastes, textures and smells of the foods they are eating, which all adds to the pleasure of eating.

You may have noticed that elders in the family hardly ever use utensils to measure all the different type of masala, and would instead prefer to use their hands to measure the quantity instead. As each handful is tailored to provide a suitable amount for the own body. Overall there are 6 main documented forms that the hands take when obtaining a measurement of a certain type of food ranging from solid food to seeds, and flour.

This is a prime example of how many things within Hindu culture may seem weird and unusual at first glance, but once a closer look is taken it is surprising, but a vast amount of knowledge is revealed.

Adapted from an online source

GREAT INSPIRATIONS

THE WOODEN BOWL

Here we feature inspirational stories sourced from the net that can impact our life

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law, and a four-year old grandson. The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred, and his step faltered. The family ate together nightly at the dinner table. But the elderly grandfather's shaky hands and failing sight made eating rather difficult. Peas

rolled off his spoon onto the floor. When he grasped the glass, often milk spilled on the tablecloth. The son and daughter-in-law became irritated with the mess. "We must do something about grandfather," said the son. "I've had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating, and food on the floor." So the husband and wife set a small table in the corner. There, grandfather ate alone while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner at the dinner table. Since grandfather had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl. Sometimes when the family glanced in grandfather's direction, he had a tear in his eye as he ate alone. Still, the only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions when he dropped a fork or spilled food. The four-year-old watched it all in silence.

One evening before supper, the father noticed his son playing with wood scraps on the floor. He asked the child sweetly, "What are you making?" Just as sweetly, the boy responded, "Oh, I am making a little bowl for you and mama to eat your food from when I grow up." The four-year-old smiled and went back to work. The words so struck the parents that they were speechless. Then tears started to stream down their cheeks. Though no word was spoken, both knew what must be done. That evening the husband took grandfather's hand and gently led him back to the family table.

For the remainder of his days he ate every meal with the family. And for some reason, neither husband nor wife seemed to care any longer when a fork was dropped, milk spilled, or the tablecloth soiled. Children are remarkably perceptive. Their eyes ever observe, their ears ever listen, and their minds ever process the messages they absorb. If they see us patiently provide a happy home atmosphere for family members, they will imitate that attitude for the rest of their lives. The wise parent realizes that every day building blocks are being laid for the child's future.

