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DIWALI

Diwali (English: [/dɪˈwɑːliː/](#); **Dee pawali** ([IAST: dīpāvali](#)) or **Divali**; related to [Jain Diwali](#), [Bandi Chhor Divas](#), [Tihar](#), [Swanti](#), [Sohrai](#) and [Bandna](#)) is a festival of lights and one of the major festivals celebrated by [Hindus](#), [Jains](#), [Sikhs](#) and some [Buddhists](#), notably [Newar Buddhists](#).^[7] The festival usually lasts five days and is celebrated during the [Hindu lunisolar](#) month [Kartika](#) (between mid-October and mid-November).^{[8][9][10]} One of the most popular festivals of Hinduism, Diwali symbolizes the spiritual "victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance".^{[11][12][13][14]} The festival is widely associated with [Lakshmi](#), goddess of prosperity, with many other regional traditions connecting the holiday to [Sita](#) and [Rama](#), [Vishnu](#), [Krisna](#), [Yama](#), [Yami](#), [Durga](#), [Kali](#), [Hanuman](#), [Ganesha](#), [Kubera](#), [Dhanvantari](#), or [Vishvakarman](#). Furthermore, it is, in some regions, a celebration of the day Lord [Rama](#) returned to his kingdom [Ayodhya](#) with his wife [Sita](#) and his brother [Lakshmana](#) after defeating [Ravana](#) in [Lanka](#) and serving 14 years of exile.

In the lead-up to Diwali, celebrants will prepare by cleaning, renovating, and

decorating their homes and workplaces with [diyas](#) (oil lamps) and [rangolis](#) (colorful art circle patterns).^[15] During Diwali, people wear their finest clothes, illuminate the interior and exterior of their homes with [diyas](#) and [rangoli](#), perform worship ceremonies of [Lakshmi](#), the goddess of prosperity and wealth,^[note 1] light fireworks, and partake in family feasts, where [mithai](#) ([sweets](#)) and gifts are shared. Diwali is also a major cultural event for the Hindu, Sikh and Jain diaspora.^{[18][19][20]}

The five-day long festival originated in the [Indian subcontinent](#) and is mentioned in early Sanskrit texts. Diwali is usually celebrated twenty days after the [Vijayadashami](#) (Dussehra, Dasara, Dasain) festival, with [Dhanteras](#), or the regional equivalent, marking the first day of the festival when celebrants prepare by cleaning their homes and making decorations on the floor, such as [rangolis](#).^[21] The second day is [Naraka Chaturdashi](#). The third day is the day of [Lakshmi Puja](#) and the darkest night of the traditional month. In some parts of India, the day after Lakshmi Puja is marked with the Govardhan Puja and [Balipratipada](#) (Padwa). Some Hindu communities mark the last day as [Bhai Dooj](#) or the regional equivalent, which is dedicated to the bond between sister and brother,^[22] while other Hindu

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and Sikh craftsmen communities mark this day as [Vishwakarma Puja](#) and observe it by performing maintenance in their work spaces and offering prayers.^{[23][24]}

Some other faiths in India also celebrate their respective festivals alongside Diwali. The [Jains](#) observe their [own Diwali](#) which marks the final liberation of [Mahavira](#),^{[25][26]} the [Sikhs](#) celebrate [Bandi Chhor Divas](#) to mark the release of Guru [Hargobind](#) from a [Mughal Empire](#) prison,^[27] while [Newar Buddhists](#), unlike other Buddhists, celebrate Diwali by worshipping Lakshmi, while the Hindus of [Eastern India](#) and [Bangladesh](#) generally celebrate Diwali, by worshipping goddess [Kali](#).^{[28][29][30]} The main day of the festival of Diwali

(the day of Lakshmi Puja) is an official holiday in [Fiji](#),^[31] [Guyana](#),^[32] [India](#), [Malaysia](#) (except

[Sarawak](#)),^[33] [Mauritius](#), [Myanmar](#),^[34] [Nepal](#),^[35] [Pakistan](#),^[36] [Singapore](#),^[37] [Sri Lanka](#), [Suriname](#), and [Trinidad and Tobago](#).

HISTORY

The Diwali festival is likely a fusion of harvest festivals in ancient India.^[49] It is mentioned in Sanskrit texts such as the [Padma Purana](#) and the [Skanda Purana](#) both of which were completed in the second half of the 1st millennium CE. The *diyas* (lamps) are mentioned in Skanda Kishore Purana as symbolising parts of the sun, describing it as the cosmic giver of light and energy to all life and which seasonally transitions in the Hindu calendar month of Kartik.^{[40][54]}

King [Harsha](#) refers to Deepavali, in the 7th century Sanskrit play [Nagananda](#), as *Dīpapratipadotsava* (*dīpa* = light, *pratipadā* = first day, *utsava* = festival), where lamps were lit and newly engaged brides and grooms received gifts.^{[55][56]} [Rajasekhara](#) referred to Deepavali as *Dipamalika* in his 9th century *Kavyamimamsa*, wherein he mentions the tradition of homes being whitewashed and oil lamps decorated homes, streets and markets in the night.^[55]

Diwali was also described by numerous travellers from outside India. In his 11th century memoir on India, the Persian traveller and historian [Al Biruni](#) wrote of Deepavali being celebrated by Hindus on the day of the New Moon in the month of Kartika.^[57] The Venetian merchant and traveller [Niccolò de' Conti](#) visited India in the early 15th-century and wrote in his memoir, "on another of these festivals they fix up within their temples, and on the outside of the roofs, an innumerable number of oil lamps... which are kept burning day and night" and that the families would gather, "clothe themselves in new garments", sing, dance and feast.^{[58][59]} The 16th-century Portuguese traveller [Domingo Paes](#) wrote of his visit to the Hindu [Vijayanagara Empire](#), where *Dipavali* was celebrated in October with householders illuminating their homes, and their temples, with lamps.^[59]

Islamic historians of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire era also mentioned Diwali and other Hindu festivals. A few, notably the [Mughal](#) emperor [Akbar](#), welcomed and participated in the festivities,^{[60][61]} whereas others banned such festivals as Diwali and [Holi](#), as [Aurangzeb](#) did in 1665.^{[62][63][note 4][note 5]}

Publications from the [British](#) colonial era also made mention of Diwali, such as the note on Hindu festivals published in 1799 by [Sir William Jones](#), a philologist known for his early observations on Sanskrit and [Indo-European languages](#).^[66] In his paper on *The Lunar Year of the Hindus*, Jones, then based in [Bengal](#), noted four of the five days of Diwali in the autumn months of *Aswina-Cartica* [sic] as the following: *Bhutachaturdasi Yamaterpanam* (2nd day), *Lacshmipuja dipanwita* (the day of Diwali), *Dyuta pratipat Belipuja* (4th day), and *Bhratri dwitiya* (5th day). The *Lacshmipuja dipanwita*, remarked Jones, was a "great festival at night, in honor of Lakshmi, with illuminations on trees and houses".

Epigraphy

Sanskrit inscriptions in stone and copper mentioning Diwali, occasionally alongside terms such as *Dipotsava*, *Dipavali*, *Divali* and *Divalige*, have been discovered at numerous sites across India.^{[68][69][note 7]} Examples include a 10th-century Rashtrakuta empire copper plate inscription of [Krsna III](#) (939–967 CE) that mentions *Dipotsava*,^[70] and a 12th-century mixed Sanskrit-Kannada Sinda inscription discovered in the Isvara temple of [Dharwad](#) in Karnataka where the inscription refers to the festival as a "sacred occasion".^[71] According to [Lorenz Franz Kielhorn](#), a German Indologist known for translating many Indic inscriptions, this festival is mentioned as *Dipotsavam* in verses 6 and 7 of the Ranganatha temple Sanskrit inscription of the 13th-century [Kerala](#) Hindu king Ravivarman Samgramadhira. Part of the inscription, as translated by Kielhorn, reads: "the auspicious festival of lights which disperses the most profound darkness, which in former days was celebrated by the kings Ila, Kartavirya and Sagara, (...) as Sakra (Indra) is of the

gods, the universal monarch who knows the duties by the three Vedas, afterwards celebrated here at Ranga for Vishnu, resplendent with Lakshmi resting on his radiant lap." ^{[72][note 8]}

Jain inscriptions, such as the 10th century Saundatti inscription about a donation of oil to Jinendra worship for the Diwali rituals, speak of *Dipotsava*.^{[73][74]} Another early 13th-century Sanskrit stone inscription, written in the Devanagari script, has been found in the north end of a mosque pillar in [Jalore](#), [Rajasthan](#) evidently built using materials from a demolished Jain temple. The inscription states that Ramachandracharya built and dedicated a drama performance hall, with a golden cupola, on Diwali