

Impressum

Ashutosh Vardhana: Diwali and Sal Mubarak

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

On 4 November this year (2002), Hindus celebrate Diwali, the 'Festival of Lights'. They also worship Lakshmi Devi, the goddess of wealth, and business people have their new accounts books blessed. The day after Diwali is New Year's Day. Gujarati Hindus greet each other with the Muslim phrase "Sal Mubarak" (for "Happy New Year"), a charming tradition which purists, sadly, discourage. Ashutosh Vardhana explains the origins and meaning of this festival.

**Ashutosh Vardhana:
Diwali and Sal Mubarak****STORY**

When evil had once again become too strong on earth, God, so the story goes, took on a human body and became Rama, son of the king of Ayodhya. He grew up in every respect like a human being of his class and as a model of honourable behaviour.

In order to be true to a promise unwisely made by his father, he, his wife Sita and his brother went into exile for fourteen years. At the end of this time, he fought and won a battle with the valiant demon king Ravana. Then he and Sita returned in triumph to his capital Ayodhya, his loyal subjects rejoiced, adorned the city and filled it with lights. That's why Hindu families light up their houses on this day.

CUSTOMS



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Making rangoli patterns

Diwali is celebrated at home rather than in temple. For this day Hindus thoroughly clean their houses, paint rangoli patterns in front of them and in their court yards. They put diyas (ghee lamps made of clay) on their window sills and at their doors. We want God in his various manifestations, especially Rama, Sita and Lakshmi, to enter our houses, and keep burglars and bad people out. People also let off fireworks.



Lakshmi Devi

On Diwali night prayers to Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and health, are said (Lakshmi puja), and business people have their accounts books for the next year blessed.

Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth



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On the next day, in many parts of India, we celebrate New Year. We offer a large number of traditional varieties of food (annakut) in the temple. These are later shared by the devotees as prasad (food offered to, and blessed by, God). People then visit one another and wish each other Happy New Year.

Annakut in temple on New Year's Day



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Annakut - Food offerings in temple

In Gujarati 'Happy New Year' is 'Sal Mubarak', an Arabic expression, which Gujarati Hindus have adopted from their Muslim neighbours. This is a sign of ancient togetherness and harmony, and we all hope that such harmony between all good and peace-loving people (as most are) can soon be re-established and the Muslim and Hindu communities wish each other 'Sal Mubarak'.

Sikhs also celebrate Diwali: their religion grew out of Hinduism. Diwali is a landmark for their religious freedom, for the sixth Sikh Guru Hargobind Sahib and 52 Hindu kings were released from prison on Diwali day in 1619.

MEANING

The deeper meaning of this festival is that Ayodhya is our heart. We should purify it so that God can enter and live there. We should worship God in our hearts. An old Sanskrit proverb says:

**A thousand Ramas born in Ayodhya will do
No good if He's not born in you.**

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