

American Hindu Association

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HINDU CONNECTIONS

October, 2006

AHA DEEPAVALI CELEBRATION

Deepawali is one of the most widely celebrated and peaceful festivals of Hindus. This festival has a very deep spiritual meaning symbolizing the light as a guiding source that displaces the darkness. Just like a deepa

(Light) illuminates our surroundings, enabling us to observe objects, similarly divine knowledge (Gyana) displaces our ignorance and shows us ultimate reality.



The American Hindu Association celebrated the Deepawali festival with a special puja on Sunday, October 22. The

program started with the worship of Lord Ganesh and Goddess Laxmi. After Sri Ganesh and Laxmi puja, Sarswati puja and Navgrah puja was successfully conducted along with Archana, and then Sankalpa. The sponsors of the Archana and Sankalpa participated in the puja with their family members personally. AHA provided flowers, fruits, rice, haldi and kumkum to the sponsored families for Archana.

The Sankalpa was conducted by priest for the sponsored families individually. A large number of Hindus from Madison and the surrounding communities participated in the program. At the end, all devotees stood in front of the altar and chanted Aarati. The Prasad was distributed by devotees after Aarati. All the devotees brought varieties of food to share with others.

Quotes & Quips

"I am a Hindu because it is Hinduism which makes the world worth living." Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

Four monks made an agreement to meditate in silence for a week and not to speak a single word. On the first day, they maintained silence. But as darkness fell, the

flame of their singular candle began to flicker. "Oh, the flame is going out," said one monk. "Eh, we should not speak a single word," said the second. "Why do you two want to speak?" said the third. "Ha! I am the only one who did not talk!" said the fourth

THE UNIVERSAL FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Diwali is the Hindu "Festival of Lights". The festival symbolizes the victory of good over evil, and lamps are lit as a sign of celebration and hope for mankind. Celebrations focus on lights and lamps, particularly traditional diyas (as illustrated). Fireworks are associated with the festival in some regions of the country. Diwali is celebrated for five consecutive days in the Hindu month of Ashwayuja. It usually occurs in October/November, and is one of the most popular and eagerly awaited festivals of India. Hindus, Jains and Sikh alike regard it as a celebration of life and use the occasion to strengthen family and social relationships.

The Five days of Diwali - Diwali has emerged as one of the most famous Hindu festivals. An integral part of Diwali decorations, Rangoli is a colorful pattern drawn on the floor.

1. Dhan-trayodashi or Dhan teras: Dhan means "wealth" and Trayodashi means "13th day". Thus, as the name implies, this day falls on the 13th day of the first half of the lunar month. It is an auspicious day for shopping.
2. Naraka Chaturdasi: Narak means of a new era of Light and Knowledge. Chaturdasi implies fourteenth day.
3. Diwali: the actual day of Diwali, is celebrated on the third day of the festival, when the moon completely wanes and total darkness sets in the night sky.
4. Varsha-pratipada or Padwa: Beginning of the New Year (Kartikadi Vikram). Pratipada means the first.
5. Bhayiduj (also Bhayyaduj, Bhaubeej or Bhayitika) — on this day, brothers and sisters meet to express their love and affection for each other.

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NINE BELIEFS OF HINDUISM

Beliefs are the building blocks of the mind. Our beliefs determine our thoughts and attitudes about life, which in turn direct our actions. By our actions we create our destiny. Beliefs about sacred matters—God, man and cosmos—are essential to one's approach to enlightenment. But beliefs are not mere matters of agreement. They are what we value and hold as true. Hindus believe many diverse things, but there are a few bedrock concepts on which most Hindus concur. The following nine beliefs, though not exhaustive, offer a simple summary of Hindu spirituality.

- 1) I believe in the divinity of the Vedas, the world's most ancient scripture, and venerate the Agamas as equally revealed. These primordial hymns are God's word and the bedrock of Sanatana Dharma, the eternal religion which has neither beginning nor end.
- 2) I believe in a one, all-pervasive Supreme Being who is both immanent and transcendent, both Creator and Unmanifest Reality.
- 3) I believe that the universe undergoes endless cycles of creation, preservation and dissolution.
- 4) I believe in karma, the law of cause and effect by which each individual creates his own destiny by his thoughts, words and deeds.
- 5) I believe that the soul reincarnates, evolving through many births until all karmas have been resolved, and moksha, spiritual knowledge and liberation from the cycle of rebirth, is attained. Not a single soul will be eternally deprived of this destiny.
- 6) I believe that divine beings exist in unseen worlds and that temple worship, rituals, sacraments as well as personal devotionals create a communion with these devas and Gods.
- 7) I believe that a spiritually awakened master, or satguru, is essential to know the Transcendent Absolute, as are personal discipline, good conduct, purification, pilgrimage, self-inquiry and meditation.
- 8) I believe that all life is sacred, to be loved and revered, and therefore practice ahimsa, "noninjury."
- 9) I believe that no particular religion teaches the only way to salvation above all others, but that all genuine religious paths are facets of God's Pure Love and Light, deserving tolerance and understanding.

- Source "Himalayan Academy Press"

American Hindu Association

Disclaimer: Views of readers/column writers are that of their own and not of the AHA
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