



Shefali Razdan Duggal

PRESS CLIPS



HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION

Diwali (Deepavali) 2011

[Significance](#) | [Greetings & Wishes](#) | [National Teach Diwali in School Day](#) |
[Diwali Toolkit](#) | [Senate Diwali Resolution](#)

Diwali Blogs: [Huffington Post](#) | [On Faith](#) | [Beliefnet](#) | [Patheos](#)

Significance

Perhaps the most widely recognized Hindu festival, Diwali, or Deepavali, will be celebrated globally October 26, 2011. Diwali, the "Festival of Lights" which symbolizes the victory of dharma, and good over evil, is the one of the most celebrated festivals in the Hindu diaspora. The word is a variation of the Sanskrit word Deepavali, and refers to the rows of earthen lamps celebrants place around their homes. Hindus believe that the light from these lamps symbolizes the illumination within the individual that overwhelms ignorance, represented by darkness. In addition to the lighting of lamps, many in India celebrate the night of Diwali with colorful firecrackers.

Many Hindus recognize Diwali as a day celebrating the return of the avatar Lord Rama (the incarnation of Lord Vishnu), His wife Sita and brother Lakshman to their capitol, Ayodhya, after 14 years of exile. The residents of Ayodhya, overjoyed at the return of their beloved King, lit lamps in His honor. Thus, the entire city looked like a row of lights. Other Hindus commemorate Diwali as the day Lord Krishna defeated the demon Narakasura.

In addition to the spiritual significance the day holds for Hindus, Sikhs celebrate the release of the Sixth Guru, Hargobind, from captivity by the Mughal Emperor Jehangir, and Jains commemorate Diwali as the day Lord Mahavira, the last of the Tirthankaras, attained Nirvana, or liberation, after his death in 527 B.C.

While the reasons for what it commemorate, Diwali is a time for *dana* (charitable giving) and *seva* (selfless service). The alleviation of tangible forms of suffering, such as hunger, disease, and poverty, is an essential component of the Hindu tradition. Service is worship, no less than performing a puja or practicing meditation or studying scripture.

In the spirit of Diwali, HAF urges you to donate your time and resources for the upliftment of those in need. Remember to support your favorite charities this Diwali through both *dana* and *seva*.

"Give. Give with faith. Do not give without faith. Give with sensitivity. Give with a feeling of abundance. Give with right understanding." - Taittiriya Upanishad

Greetings & Wishes

Congressional, State, and Local Leaders

"I am honored to offer my warm and heartfelt wishes to the Hindu American Foundation community and all others in this joyous celebration of Diwali. In these times of significant turmoil and change, it is important to remember the underlying meaning of Diwali—the belief that light outshines darkness and that ultimately good always triumphs over evil. I hope we are all able to spend this Diwali with our family and friends in peace and happiness and with light shining upon us. Happy Diwali and best wishes for the new year ahead."

-Shefali Razdan Duggal, Democratic Political Activist