



**Om asato ma sad gamaya,  
Tamsa ma jyotir gamaya,  
Mrityorma mritam gamaya.**

**O Lord lead us from untruth to truth,  
Lead us from darkness to light,  
Lead us from death to immortality.**

**I wish you all a Truly Illuminating Deepawali!**

India is the land of festivals .Every nation, race and religion has its own festivals. The literal meaning of festival is any kind of regularly held joyous celebration which make us remember the rationale behind it and enables us to rededicate ourselves to its cause. These festivals keep the nation, the race alive and inspired. These festivals add joy and luster to life and fill it with new hopes , aspirations, and vitality. Deepawali (Diwali) is the main festivals of Hindus.

Diwali falls on a new moon day in the month of October or November. Since the precise moment of the new moon falls on different dates depending on geographical location, the date of Diwali also depends on one's location. Diwali leads us into Truth and Light and is celebrated on Amavasya - the 15th day of the dark fortnight of the Hindu month of Kartik every year. It symbolizes that age-old culture of our country which teaches us to vanquish ignorance that subdues humanity and to drive away darkness that engulfs the light of knowledge.

Diwali Festival is the abbreviation of the Sanskrit word 'Deepavali', which means 'rows of lights'. One of the major Hindu festivals, it is celebrated to commemorate the returning of Rama and Sita to their kingdom Ayodhya after fourteen years of exile. This tradition took the shape of religious festival ever since. Though, Diwali is mainly a five- day festival but we can see people preparing Diwali weeks ahead by cleaning and decorating their households. Various kinds of sweets are prepared and distributes along with other gifts among friends and relatives. Deepawali festival, therefore, heralds joy and merriment for young and old, rich and poor alike.

Diwali is also celebrated in various parts of the world, such as Britain, The Netherlands, Suriname, Canada, Guyana, Mauritius, Fiji, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Australia, much of Africa, and the United States. With more and more Indians now migrating to various parts of the world, the number of countries where Diwali is celebrated has been gradually increasing. While in some countries it is celebrated mainly by Indian expatriates, in others it has become part of the general local culture.

To add to the festival of Diwali, fairs called *Melas* are held throughout India, in many towns and villages. A mela generally becomes a market day in the countryside when farmers buy and sell produce.

Diwali is also an annual stimulus for the Indian economy. It is therefore, a festival, which reminds us of wealth and the manner of earning the same. Every true Hindu on this day takes a pledge, to earn wealth through right means. Beside happiness, and joyous feelings deepwali has a spiritual message “ Victory of good over evil, light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, truth over falsehood”. **”Asato ma sad gamaya, Tamso ma jyotir gamaya, Mrityorma mritam gamaya.”**

Deepawali is the main festival of Hindus, but others also celebrate it for different reasons. The Sikhism’s link to Diwali is much more recent. According to intertwined history of Mogul dynasty that ruled India for two centuries, Sikh Guru Arjun Sahib was tortured and martyred by the Mogul King Jahangir. The King arrested his successor, Guru Hargobind and imprisoned him in Gwalior. Eventually the King relented and released the Guru. The Guru asked that 52 rulers imprisoned with him should also be released. To the joy of the Sikhs the Guru returned to Amritsar on Diwali and it prompted the followers to celebrate the day with joy and happiness. Sikhs also celebrate Diwali to commemorate the laying of the foundation stone for the Golden Temple in 1577. Early in the morning, Sikh pilgrims take a dip in the sacred tank while reciting Japji Sahib, and then pray at the Golden Temple. Circumambulation of the tank is done.

Deepawali is also a reminder of the sad death of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, founder of Arya Samaj. Swami Ji was a great religious philosopher, guide and reformer of modern times. He was always an exponent of true aspect of Hinduism in accordance with the dictates of the Vedas. All his life he fought against ignorance and illiteracy, which was the cause of all superstitions resulting in the misery and decay of Hindu Society. He was responsible for giving the correct interpretation of Vedic literature and hence his message “ Back to the Vedas” to correct all the ills of Hinduism.

On this day therefore right minded Hindus pay rich tributes to the memory of Maharishi for his selfless work for the betterment of the Hindu Society. It is day of rededication to the ethical, moral and social value-system. Let’s kindle innumerable lights on this day to immortalize the sacred memories of those great men who lived to brighten the lives of millions of their fellow beings.

*I would like to extend my warmest greetings to you all on the occasion of*

*Diwali and New Year.*

*OM SHANTHI, SHANTIH, SHANTIH.*

*Kewal Ahluwalia.*