

"Diwali Celebration"

Moving From Darkness into Light

LESSON INTENTION

This is a Hindu celebration of light.

History

Diwali is a five day Hindu celebration that celebrates moving from darkness into light. It typically is celebrated on the 15th day of the dark fortnight of the Hindu month of Ashwin (Aasho) (October / November) every year. Diwali means "rows of lights" and it teaches us to vanquish the ignorance that subdues humanity and to drive away darkness that engulfs the light of knowledge. Diwali reminds us to uphold the true values of life. It is also a time when sad things are forgotten and happy times are remembered.

A typical celebration would include making multi-colored Rangoli designs, which are Hindu floor paintings made using colored powder or paint. They are meant to be temporary. In the evening the home is alight with the diyas, which are small earthen lamps that welcome Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Prayers are said to her to ensure wealth and prosperity. This is followed by a wonderful meal that the whole family enjoys. Then later in the evening fireworks are set off as this represents the Hindu New Year. Diwali means as much to Hindus as Christmas does to Christians.

Diwali is enthusiastically celebrated for five continuous days and each day has its significance with a number of myths, legends and beliefs.

The First Day

The First day is called DHANTERAS. This is when Rangoli designs are created to welcome the goddess of wealth and prosperity, Lakshmi. The diyas are kept lit all night long. Wealth is respected in India as it signifies that a person has been rewarded for good deeds in a past life.

The Second Day

The second day is called NARKA-CHATURDASHI. It is a celebration of victory of the Divine over the mundane. In Hindu tradition King Bali of the nether world was gaining power. Lord Vishnu devised a plan to curb his powers by disguising himself as a small boy and asking for as much land as he could cover in three steps. King Bali granted his wish and the boy changed back into Lord Vishnu and took two giant steps the covered the heavens and the earth. King Bali conceded defeat and Lord Vishnu rewarded him

by giving him the lamp of knowledge and allowing him to return to the earth once a year to light millions of lamps to dispel darkness and ignorance and spread love and wisdom. So, this day is dedicated to lights and prayers heralding a future full of joy and laughter.

The Third Day

The third day, known as LAKSHMI-PUJA is the most important. It is entirely devoted to celebrating the goddess of wealth and prosperity, LAKSHMI. It is a time of balancing account books, closing the old accounts and opening the new. It is believed that as the lights penetrate the darkness and Vedic hymns are chanted the living luminance of Lakshmi envelopes the entire world in Universal Motherhood. Self-enlightenment is expressed through the lights as Lakshmi walks through the fields and lanes showering her blessings of prosperity on humankind.

The Fourth Day

The fourth day is known as PADWA which is observed as Annakoot, which means mountain of food. After prayers and worship services delicious sweets are shared by all. Goddess Lakshmi is again honored and her blessings are sought for success and happiness. This day is looked upon as a good day to start any new venture. Wives also pray for long life for their husbands and wives and newly married daughters are given costly gifts.

The Fifth Day

The final day of Diwali is known as BHAYYA-DUJ. This day is observed as a symbol of love between brother and sister. Personal relationships are celebrated and it is a day of food-sharing, gift-giving and reaching out to the inner most depths of the hearts.

Diwali, on the whole, is a social, personal, people-oriented festival in which enmities are forgotten, families and friends meet, enjoy and reestablish closeness.

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore has so aptly put forth the true significance of Diwali in these beautiful lines:

***"The night is black,
Kindle the lamp of LOVE with thy life and devotion."***

Creative Expression

First we will create our Rangoli and Diyas and then we will close with a brief celebration.

Hindu Floor Painting - Rangoli

A rangoli is a colorful design made on the floor near the entrance to a house to welcome guests. At Diwali, Hindus draw bright Rangoli patterns to encourage the goddess Lakshmi to enter their homes. The patterns are traditionally drawn with the fingers using flour, rice grains or coloured chalk.

Rangoli can be square, rectangular or circular – or a mix of all three. They are often symmetrical. Rangoli motifs are usually taken from Nature - peacocks, swans, mango, flowers and so on.

Creating your own Rangoli

Materials: Large sheet of black construction paper, colored chalk, colored sand or salt, glue and graph paper.

1. Decide on your design

The designs are usually brightly colored, symmetrical, geometric designs. Motifs are usually taken from nature. Sketch your design on the paper or you can use the graph paper to try out different ideas.

For younger children, it may be best for you to draw the outline of a simple design and ask the children to color it in.

2. Decide on your medium

Chalk

Even the youngest children will enjoy creating their own chalk rangoli designs. First, use a white chalk to outline your patterns, or to draw dots to form a grid. Then use colored chalks to fill in the design.

Coloured sand or salt

To make the design moveable, outline your design on the paper and then fill in each section with white glue, sprinkling sand or salt as you would glitter. Do one color at a time and shake off the excess. Allow time to dry.

Diyas

Materials: Modeling clay, water, tea lights

Invite the children to create their own lamp by making pinch pots out of the clay. Allow them to dry and then add a tea light.

The Celebration

Materials: Rangoli designs and diyas (the ones the children are making will not be ready so have some pots & candles already set up.

1. Invite the children to stand in a circle and place their Rangoli mat in front of them.
2. Read the following statement and then light the rows of diyas.

***"The night is black,
Kindle the lamp of LOVE with thy life and devotion."***

3. Share the following prayer:

We invite the goddess Lakshmi into our lives today to bless us
with wealth and prosperity.

As we let go of the past and old hurts we welcome a new year
filled with love and joy.

We know that as we let our inner light shine for all to see we light the way for Spirit to
bless us in all ways.

And for this we are grateful, amen.

4. Enjoy some refreshments and have some small gifts to share.