

## Diwali, the Festival of Lights

Diwali! A day to rejoice! A day to be happy with exchanging sweets, delicious food and wearing new clothes! Bright lights everywhere and the sound of firecrackers, which drives people crazy sometimes.



### Form and Meaning of Diwali

Diwali or *Deepavali* is a Hindu light festival. This word is a combination of two words: *Deep*, which means light; and *Awali*, which means line. Deepavali = lights in a row or line.

Diwali falls annually on a new moon day during the month of *Ashwin-Kartika* (October-November). The five-day celebration begins from the 13th day of the dark half of the lunar month *Ashvina* until the second day of the light half of *Kartika*.

For five jubilant days, lamps and candles will sparkle, fireworks will burst overhead, gifts will be opened, and platters of sweets will be passed around. But more importantly, this period of rejoicing symbolises the triumph of light over darkness and the glory of light. It is an occasion that provides a time for celebrants to reaffirm connections to loved ones. It is a family celebration.

The festival has roots in traditional Hindu beliefs. Commemorating King Rama's return to his kingdom Ayodhya after completing a 14-year exile, people decorate their homes, light thousands of lamps and give out sweets. There are fireworks in the streets. Non-Hindu communities, such as Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs, celebrate Diwali at the same time as Hindus but for different reasons.

## What people experience today?

Although surrounded by numerous lights many people are immersed in darkness. They think that the devil, *Raavan* was killed but they do not understand that the devil (Satan) still lives and keeps them under bondage to sin.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like...those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Sin is also called the darkness of the world. The whole world is in darkness. Why? The whole world is in darkness because evil rules it and it is separated from God: "The world is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19)."

The Bible also says: "Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him (1 John 2: 9-11).

Sin and Satan have blinded the minds of people so that they cannot see the light of the good news of the real God who came in flesh and who is the image of God. The *puranic* (Hindu writings) stories were written to make people understand that God has to come in flesh to release the people from the bondage to sin and Satan.

"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives (1 John 1:5-10)."

## Who is the incarnation of God manifested in flesh?

"For God who said, let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6)."



"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:16-18)."

*If this is true then why don't people accept this light who is Jesus the Christ?*

The Bible has the answer again. "Light has come into this world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God (John 3:19-21)".

## Jesus: the Light of the World

Prophet Isaiah testified about the light of Jesus Christ as it is written in Isaiah 9:1-2: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."

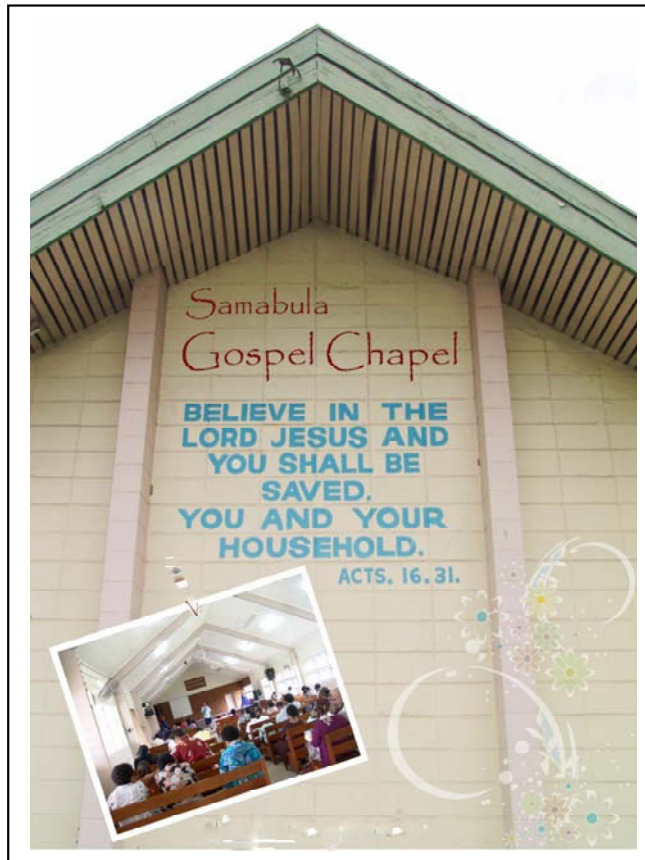
Jesus himself said: "I am the light of this world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

## Diwali = Jesus: the Light of the World

The real meaning of *Deepavali* or Diwali is that God the light has come into the world to remove sin and darkness. When Christ came into the world, the world was given light - the light that leads to eternal life.

The world is in darkness because it is spiritually blind and detached from the life of God. The world cannot understand the things of God. Christ is the light because He brings light to people's darkened minds. Christ is the light because He reveals truth about God and His Kingdom. Christ is the light because He is the one who reveals to men God's way of righteousness and salvation.

See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness (Luke 11:35). The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. (Romans 13:12). **Jesus Christ is the light of the world.** A Diwali without Christ is a Diwali without light.



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