



DIWALI



Spiritual Significance

Diwali has many legends and religious accounts to it. One of which is the welcome of Lord Ram and his wife Sita from their return of exile after conquering the evil Ravan. Ravan was killed on Dashera day and 20 days later, on Diwali, Lord Ram returns to Ayodhya. Ayodhya was under darkness, which implies ignorance, while Ram was away for 14 years. Lights and diyas are lit to signify the driving away of darkness and ignorance, as well as the awakening of the light within, to show welcome and happiness on return of its King, the avatar of Vishnu. Laxmi Pooja is performed to adorn Sita Mata (an avatar of Laxmi) on her return to Kingdom along with Lord Ram.

There is also a connection of Jhule Lal (the Water God) to Sindhi Diyari. Since Sindhis were a maritime trading nation, Diyari was a time of celebration tinged with expectation and anxiety for the journey that followed. At the time of their departure, they had to keep in mind the season when the sea would be calm. It was about October when the surface winds were again favorable that the Sindhi adventurers prepared to leave. There was also the panic created by the fierce north wind, which brought on the fear of separation in the hearts of the women-folk. Thus, they prayed to Jhule Lal to protect and bring their men back home safely. Sindhis generally regard Diwali as a new beginning, but consider Cheti Chand, the celebration of Jhulelal's birth, as the true Sindhi New Year.

The five days of Diwali

A time for family gatherings, food, celebration and pooja that are just a few of the aspects of Diwali. The goddess Laxmi plays a major role in this festival, as do Ram and Sita. Diwali is derived from the Sanskrit word "Deepavali", meaning row of lights. One of its main significance is to teach us to vanquish ignorance that subdues humanity and to drive away darkness that engulfs the light of knowledge. This autumn festival is celebrated for five continuous days, of which each one has its own significance.

The First day is called **Dhanteras** or **Dhantrayodashi**. This day falls two days before Diwali. The word "Dhan" means wealth, which ties into the importance for this day. Houses and Businesses are renovated and decorated, entrances are made colorful with lovely traditional motifs of Rangoli designs to welcome Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity. To indicate her long awaited arrival, small footprints are drawn with rice flour and vermilion powder (kumkum) all over the houses. Lamps



www.YoungSindhiAdults.org

are kept burning all through the nights. Since this is believed to be an auspicious day, women traditionally purchase some gold or silver or at least one or two new utensils, as this 'acquisition of wealth' is deemed to be a sign of good luck. Laxmi Pooja is performed in the evenings when tiny diyas of clay are lit to drive away the shadows of evil spirits. Bhajans are sung in praise of the goddess and sweets are offered to her. Dhanteras is also referred to as **Yamandeeptaan**. This reference goes back to a story of a young wife who saved her husband from the clutches of death, thus lamps are kept burning throughout the night in reverential adoration to Yam, the god of Death.

The Second day is called **Narkachodus** or **Karichodus**. There is a story connected to Lord Krishna to this day before Diwali. A demon king by the name of Narakasur troubled the people of his town. He was killed by Krishna on the black night of this day, that is why diyas are lit in every house.

The Third day is the most important day of **Diwali**. This day of Laxmi Pooja is entirely devoted to the Goddess. Families celebrate in their own houses by wearing new clothes, exchanging sweets and performing the Laxmi Pooja. Homes are lit with oil lamps to welcome Laxmi. New account books are opened so that more wealth is earned for the New Year.

The Fourth day is **Barh** or **Paswa**. Traditionally families visit each other. Prayers are held at temples for Lord Krishna. This day also marks the coronation of King Vikramaditya and Vikram-Samvat was started. Goddess Laxmi is worshipped and her blessings are sought for success and happiness. This day is looked up as an auspicious day to start any new venture.

The Fifth and final day is known as **Kati-a-Jo-Chand** or **Bhayya-Duj**. As the legend goes Yamraj, the God of Death visited his sister Yami on this particular day. She put the auspicious tilak on his forehead, garlanded him and led him with special dishes and both of them together ate the sweets, talked and enjoyed themselves to their heart's content, while parting Yamraj gave her a special gift as a token of his love and in return Yami also gave him a lovely gift which she had made with her own hands. That day Yamraj announced that anyone who receives tilak from his sister will never be thrown. That is why this day of Bhayyaduj is also known by the name of "YAMA-DWITIYA" Since then this day is being observed as a symbol of love between sisters and brothers. It became also imperative for the brother to go to his sister's house to celebrate Bhayyaduj.

www.bawarchi.com
www.dalsabzi.tripod.com

Dr. Gul Agha

YSA Discussion Forum Postings by members.

Research from friends, relatives and community members.

Your comments, suggested additions & revisions are encouraged – we will do our best to incorporate them into the 2003 edition. Please send your correspondence and materials to YSAModerator@yahoo.com. Thank you!

YSA - Copyright 2002
All rights reserved.

May not be reproduced without acknowledgement to YSA & sources.



RANGOLI



Rangoli (ran-goal-i, also known as Alpana, Kolam and by other names) is a traditional art of decorating courtyards and walls of Indian houses, places of worship and sometimes eating places as well. The powder of white stone, lime, rice flour and other cheap paste is used to draw intricate and ritual designs. Each state of India has its own way of painting Rangoli. One characteristic of Rangoli is that it is painted by commoners. On some special occasions it is painted in every home, with or without formal training in Rangoli art. The art is typically transferred from generation to generation and from friend to friend.

<http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/art/rangoli.htm>

Rangoli

A colorful design called a Rangoli is made near the entrance to a house to welcome guests. Traditionally they are painted or created out of colored sand/rice powder. A symmetrical design or picture (Gods, Goddess, Dancers, Diyas etc.) is drawn and colored rice powder/sand is then layered on top to form a picture. A symmetrical design can be drawn on paper or card and then decorated by children with crumpled tissue paper. Also sand could be used, mixed with paint or colored with food colorings. (mix sand with water colored with food colorant, pour off excess and leave to dry in a warm place). Chalk could also be used to draw a Rangoli directly on to paving stones in a secure outside area.

Diya

A Diya is a small light that is lit especially at Diwali. They are usually made of clay. Ghee (clarified butter) or oil is used as the fuel and cotton wool as the wick. Sometimes they are made by part filling a glass with colored water, Ghee is floated on top, and again cotton wool used as a wick. Children could make their own Diya with air dry clay or play dough. For safety reasons these should not be lit with Ghee and cotton wool. Child minders may however like to light a candle out of reach of children.

<http://www.lbcma.org.uk/festivals/Mdiwali2.html>

Diwali, the festival of lights - time to enjoy with family and friends, eating specially made sweets and savories, light diyas, burst crackers and dress up to look your dazzling best. Apart from decorating lighting up your home with diyas or candles, why not bring in some color as well? We are referring to rangoli, the traditional art of decorating floors with patterns using colored powder. Although this art is Maharashtrian in origin, it has become quite popular all over the country. If you want to create your own rangoli this Diwali, we help you out with the basics.

What you will need to create a rangoli

The rangoli patterns are usually made with rice powder that has been colored with dyes. You can get lovely, bright colors to make your designs with. Most shops that sell Diwali related items like diyas and crackers stock rangoli powder. You can even use flower petals, cereals (the orange and yellow colored dal), turmeric powder, to lend color to your rangoli. You will also need a piece of chalk to draw the outline of the rangoli design on the floor.

How to create the rangoli

- Choose a design that you want to draw. You may find designs from books and magazines or you may try to create your own design. Rangoli designs are symmetrical in nature and geometric in shape. If you want to try out a design of your own, first draw it on a piece of paper and fill in the design with colored sketch pens to get an idea about how the rangoli will look.
- Wipe the floor (where you want to create the rangoli) with a wet cloth and wait for the area to dry. With a piece of chalk, first draw the outline of the rangoli design.
- Now it's time to fill in the outline with rangoli powder, the most challenging part of the whole exercise! Pick up some powder with your thumb and index finger and fill in the design by rubbing the two fingers together and sprinkling the powder on the floor. Take care to sprinkle the powder carefully, don't let powders of two different colors merge with each other. You may create spaces within the rangoli design to place diyas. You could also use flower petals of different colors (golden marigolds, bright red roses) to add that extra dimension to your design. With a little bit of imagination, a dash of aesthetic sense and dollops of patience, you can create a piece of art that will add lots of color to your Diwali celebrations!

<http://www.koolindians.com/partyideas/rangoli.php3>

Note - the practice of Rangoli is traditionally not common among Sindhis, but because of its recent surge in popularity, we have included the information in this handout.



www.YoungSindhiAdults.org

SINDHI DIWALI POOJA VIDHEE Procedure of a Sindhi Diwali Pooja

Keep your house clean and draw a rangoli at your doorstep to welcome Goddess Laxmi. For the best time for puja, you may consult a pandit.

What you will need:

Silver and gold coins.	Ten Suparis	Uncooked Rice
Five paan leaves	A coconut	Water in the 'lota'. (Ganga water if available)
Kumkum for applying tilak	Diya	Gulaal (holi color)
Mithaai (Indian sweets)	Camphor	Agarbattis (incense sticks)
Dry fruit (almonds, cashews)	Thaali	Rose or other flower petals
Red string	New notebook	Bowl of milk (1/2 cup)

Procedure:

- On a new piece of cloth, make mounds of rice and place suparis on top. The suparis stand for the planets. Either keep another supari for Ganesh, or a Ganesh icon.
- Fill the Lota with water, adorn paan leaves around the lota .Place a coconut on top of the lota. Tie a red string around the lota. On the lota draw with kumkum four lines representing the Vedas. A Swastika moving clockwise with 4 tika, as illustrated on the front page of this document.
- Light the agarbattis and the diyas.
- On a thaali place the silver and golden coins. These represent 'wealth' or Mother Laxmi. Take some water on your left hand and sprinkle water on to yourself after washing and purifying your hands.
- Place a flower petal on your palm with some rice.
- Chant the Gayatri Mantra 3 times (optional).
- Now first visualize Lord Ganesh. Welcome Him to your puja. Chant *Om Ganeshaya Namah*
- Pray to Shivji the same way. Chant: *Om Namah Shivaya* Sprinkle water on the lota, apply kum kum, shower rice, offer a mithaai and dry fruit and accord the same treatment that you would to an esteemed guest. The water in the lota stands for all the sacred rivers.
- Follow the same procedure with the 9 planets and the 4 directions. Sprinkle water towards the North, South, East and West. These are the 4 'dishaas' of the world or the Universe.
- In the milk bowl, add water, gullal, flower petals and mithaai then put the silver and gold coins in. It is said if you make the coins jingle, it would attract Laxmi Ma to come to you. Visualize MahaLaxmi and say: *Om Shreem MahaLakshmaye Namah*. In some families, it is tradition to tap a coin to your teeth and to your eyes. Tapping the coin to one's teeth is that though we pray for wealth, we acknowledge that we will not take our material wealth with us; and tapping them to one's eyes symbolizes one's request of intellectual stimulus.
- Now you are ready for the Aarti. Light the Aarti diya. Light camphor. Sing the aarti to the tune of 'Om Jai Jagdeesh hare' along with the accompaniment of the jingle of the bell – the words follow.

Do the above with faith and devotion and don't worry too much if you do not do it very correctly. Say '*Haraye Namaha*' 3 times. That takes care of all the mistakes that you may have committed knowingly or unknowingly during the ritual. What is most important is your faith and love. After the Aarti, the 'Palau' is traditionally recited, followed by the 'Bhog', which is the offering of the sweets and food prepared for the occasion to the deities for blessing.



THE MAHALAXMI AARTI

*Om Jai Laxmi Mata, Maiya JaiLaxmi Mata,
Tumko nis din sevat, Hari, Vishnu Data
Om Jai Laxmi Mata*

*Uma Rama Brahmaani, Tum ho Jag Mata,
Maiya, Tum ho Jag Mata,
Surya ChanraMa dhyaavat, Naarad Rishi gaata.
Om Jai Laxmi Mata.*

*Durga Roop Niranjani, Sukh Sampati Data,
Maiya Sukh Sampati Data
Jo koyee tumko dhyaataa, Ridhee Sidhee dhan paataa
Om Jai Laxmi Mata.*

*Jis ghar mein tu rehtee, sab sukh guna aataa,
Maiya sab sukh guna aataa,
Taap paap mit jaataa, Man naheen ghabraataa.
Om Jai Laxmi Mata*

*Dhoop Deep phal meva, Ma sweekaar karo,
Maiya Ma sweekaar karo,
Gyaan prakaash karo Ma, Moha agyaan haro.
Om Jai Laxmi Mata.*

*Maha Laxmiji ki Aarti, nis din jo gaavey
Maiya nis din jo gaavey,
Dukh jaavey, sukh aavey, Ati aananda paavey.
Om Jai Laxmi Mata.*



www.YoungSindhiAdults.org

PALAU

The Palau ceremony is said after songs of worship {panjras} (versed after the Aarti). The ‘Palau’ literally means the end part of a saree. We end our prayer with a request to the Lord to fill up the ‘jholee’ or the palau which they hold in their hand in a symbolic attempt to fill it with the goodies that they prayed for and which they expect to drop from Heaven at the end of their ritual. This is done by holding the lower part of the shirt stretched out to beg from the Lord the good and welfare of all. One should also pray for the well being of others before one asked anything for oneself.

Jhalan Jee Mehel Athai,
Jhaley Vath Toon Jholee,
Dyan Vaaro Daataa Mahadev Aahey,
Palao Jekey Paayey
Tuhinje Dar Tey Aayaa,
Unan Joon Toon Aasoon Umedoon Pujaayeen,
Katey Kashta Tan Jaa,
Ain Man Jaa Sabheyee,
Vathee Pehenje Hath Saan Sayen Dar
Lagaayeen
Ehro Naath Muhinjo Mahadev Aahee,
Bholaanath Aahey Mahadev Aahey

*It is Time to Spread Out Your Jholee
(Palav, to receive)
The Giver is Mahadev
Those Who Spread Out Their Jholee,
And Come to Your Door-Step,
You Answer Their Prayers.
You Cure Their Physical and Emotional
Ailments,
And Gently Lead Them to the Right Door.
Such is my Lord Mahadev
Such is the Lord Bholaanaath.*

BHOG

The Bhog ceremony is the offering of the ‘parshaad’ or the sweets and food to the deities for blessing. Some people recite a specific mantra during this ritual while some others say a few personal words of appreciation. Either way, it is one’s personal way of making offerings and securing blessings for what they are about to consume. This detail is not very important as long as your thoughts and feelings are pure and your appreciation is genuine.

The items offered are gathered in small amounts on a plate or a ‘thaali’ – then placed in front of the altar. Some people go through the act of feeding the deities. If you chose to do so, you must use your right hand, and make sure it is clean. Again, purity of thought and spirit is critical. It is important to remember that all offerings MUST be vegetarian and MUST NOT have been eaten by anyone prior to being offered to the deities. Once offered, the items are returned to the pots or serving trays from which they were taken – an action that symbolically spreads the blessings of the food into everything that is prepared / served. After the bhog the pooja is considered complete and family members feed / offer each other the sweets and gather for the meal and Diwali socializing.



www.YoungSindhiAdults.org

‘ Satt Bhajiyoun ’

Kavita Chugani – Los Angeles

There are as many different versions of the Satt Bhajiyoun as there are different traditions in every Sindhi home. The idea that is shared by all homes is the meaning behind the 7-vegetable-casserole: so many vegetables - so your crop is good year round - may you have abundance of this in your homes. And, the number 7 because it's an auspicious number in Hinduism; at times thought to be the combination of the 5 elements (air, earth, fire, water, and sun) and two senses (taste and smell) – which grant us tolerance, patience and the tolerance to face adversity.

Here is a recipe from my home. The choices of vegetables are yours. The only thing that did not count as part of the seven were herbs, leaves, and spices (i.e., cilantro, bay leaves, chili)

2 carrots, washed peeled and diced	1 can cream of mushroom soup
2 small potatoes, washed peeled and diced	Water
1/2 cup de-stringed green beans, ends cut off	Teaspoon curry powder
1/2 cup mushrooms coarsely chopped	2 cloves of crushed garlic
1/2 cup lima beans	Fresh green chili to taste
1/2 cup green peas	Salt to taste
1/2 cup kernel corn	2 tablespoons of cooking oil

In medium saucepan, heat oil then add garlic. Brown slightly then add all vegetables. Add a pinch of salt and cover and cook for 5 minutes on low heat stirring once. Then add cream of mushroom soup and can of water. Mix to cover all the vegetables. Add curry powder and chili. Cook for an additional 10 minutes or until potatoes are cooked. Add salt to taste and serve with steamed white rice. Serves 2-4 people.

Another idea for a sauce base:

Brown teaspoon of brown mustard seeds in cooking oil. Add 2-3 chopped tomatoes, add chili and salt to taste. Add teaspoon of turmeric powder. Cover and cook until tomato base is paste-like in consistency. Add choice of vegetables. Simmer and serve topped with fresh chopped cilantro.

Remember: Cooking it in any flavor that you like is your choice. The seven vegetables that you need for this recipe are your choice. The only requirement is that the dish remains meatless and the thought remain pure.



www.YoungSindhiAdults.org

‘Varo’

Munsha Ramsinghani- Los Angeles

Ingredients:

2 cups of chopped nuts (traditional Sindhi Diwali Varo is made with almonds and pistachios, however any nuts can be used)
1 tbsp of khus-khus (white poppy seeds), optional
1 tsp of finely minced ilachi (cardamom)
2 cups of sugar
1 tbsp of oil
Lemon juice of 1/2 a lemon (approximately 1/2 tsp)

Procedure:

1. Prepare a large cutting board or surface with large piece of foil. You may need two large pieces, side by side. Grease the foil and a rolling pin heavily with oil.
2. Roast nuts, khus-khus, and ilachi in oven (small toaster oven can be used also) for 10 minutes at 375 degrees. Make sure the nuts do not get brown or burnt.
3. In a heavy pan, place oil, sugar and lemon juice. Cook on high heat on stove. Slowly mix all ingredients over high-medium heat. The sugar, oil and lemon juice will start melting into a brown mixture (approximately 10 minutes), you may want to turn down the heat on the stove. The sugar should not be bubbling out of control.
4. Once the mixture has completely melted, mix in the nuts, ilachi and khus-khus mixture. At this point, turn the heat completely off. Continue to mix until all the nuts are completely covered with sugar.
5. Immediately pour all of the mixture onto the prepared foil. Slowly start to roll the mixture very flat and thin with greased rolling pin as the varo cools. The mixture will be sticky at first, so start and then work fast before it cools. The thinner the varo is rolled out, the crispier it will be, so put some muscle into it!!
6. Once the varo has completely cooled, it will easily come off the foil. Break into desired size. Store in cool, dry place.



www.YoungSindhiAdults.org

‘ A Bachelor’s Mithai ’

Anil Vaswani - Atlanta

Ingredients:

2-3 tablespoons hot water
2 tablespoons butter
1 generous pinch of saffron
1 generous teaspoon of ground cardamom
14 oz blanched almonds or cashews, coarsely ground (in a food processor)
14 oz sweetened condensed fat free milk

Directions:

- 1) Preheat your oven to 375 degrees
- 2) Spread 1/2 tablespoon butter on a flat baking dish.
- 3) In a small bowl, mix hot water, saffron and cardamom. Cover and set aside to let flavors steep and infuse.
- 4) Using a food processor, coarsely grind the nuts. Be careful and use a pulsing or on / off technique so as to not to turn the nuts into a paste (We don't want peanut butter!)
- 5) In a mixing bowl, combine the ground nuts, condensed milk and 1 1/2 tablespoon of butter.
- 6) Add the water / saffron / cardamom mixture into the big bowl; stir in completely to blend.
- 7) Divide the mixture and pour into the baking dish, do not have the mixture more than 2 1/2 to 3 inches deep.
- 8) Bake approximately 20–30 minutes, until the mixture solidifies and has developed a beige colored crust.
- 9) Remove from oven and let cool on a cooling rack, uncovered, until it sets. Let cool completely –otherwise, it will not set. Once cooled and set, cut and serve.
- 10) Store in a dry airtight container. Refrigerate if keeping for more than 24 hours.