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Diwali: The Festival of Lights That Keeps Setting Records

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Diwali: The Festival of Lights That Keeps Setting Records

A small clay lamp can carry a whole festival. Diwali links many stories, faiths and regions through one idea: light over darkness. In 2025, UNESCO gave it world recognition.

At a glance

Four key facts on this topic

01 **Five days**From Dhanteras to Bhai Dooj.

02 **Day 3**Lakshmi-Ganesha Puja.

03 **10 Dec 2025**UNESCO inscription.

04 **26,17,215**Diyas lit at Ayodhya.

Why do we light lamps on Diwali?

1 Why We Light Lamps

1.1 What is Diwali?

Diwali, or Deepavali, is the festival of lights. People light oil lamps, make rangoli, share sweets and visit family.

The name comes from Sanskrit. “Deep” means a clay lamp and “avali” means a row.



Clay diyas lit for Diwali. Photo by humdingor, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

1.2 Why is Diwali celebrated?

There is no single story. Different traditions remember different events.

- **Ramayana:** the return of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile and their victory over Ravana. Lamps lit their path.
- **Mahabharata:** the return of the Pandavas after their exile.
- **Naraka Chaturdashi:** Krishna's victory over Narakasura, the end of evil.
- **Lakshmi:** the goddess is believed to visit lit homes on Diwali night.

> 6. **Think it through:** Rama's story and Krishna's story are different. What idea do they share? See answer ↓

Quick check 1. True or false: Diwali is linked to only one story, the return of Rama to Ayodhya. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

What happens on each of the five days?

2 Five Days, Five Meanings

2.1 How long does Diwali last?

Diwali is a five-day festival. Each day has its own meaning.

The five days of Diwali

Day	Name	What happens
1	Dhanteras	Families buy new metalware or essentials that symbolise prosperity.
2	Naraka Chaturdashi	Rituals and lamps dispel negativity. It recalls Krishna's victory over Narakasura.
3	Lakshmi-Ganesha Puja	The highlight of Deepavali. Homes glow with rangoli, sweets and lamps.
4	Visiting day	Families and friends visit, exchange gifts and reconnect.

Day	Name	What happens
5	Bhai Dooj	A tribute to the bond between brothers and sisters.

2.2 Which day is the main Diwali?

The third day is the main Diwali. It is the day of the sacred Lakshmi-Ganesha Puja.

> **Quick check 2.** True or false: The Lakshmi-Ganesha Puja is held on the third day of Diwali. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: incredibleindia.gov.in

How do different faiths and regions celebrate Diwali?

3 One Festival, Many Traditions

3.1 How do Jains see Diwali?

Jains remember Diwali as the day Lord Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankar, attained Nirvana at Pavapuri.

His disciples begged him not to leave. Mahavira told them to light the lamp within and conquer darkness. Jains celebrate the day as Nirvana Day.

3.2 Is Diwali the same everywhere?

No. The festival changes from region to region.

- **Maharashtra:** the visit of King Bali, a symbol of justice and generosity.
- **Bengal, Odisha and Assam:** worship of Goddess Kali for protection and inner strength.
- **Some regions:** Govardhan or Annakut, which recalls Krishna lifting the Govardhan Hill.
- **Dev Deepavali:** Shiva's victory over Tripurasura, marked with a Ganga bath and lamps.

> 7. **Think it through:** Why do so many faiths and regions share one festival of light? See answer ↓

Quick check 3. True or false: Jains mark Diwali as the day Lord Mahavira attained Nirvana. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Why did UNESCO recognise Deepavali?

4 A Living Heritage

4.1 Why did UNESCO recognise Deepavali?

On 10 December 2025, Deepavali was inscribed on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The decision came at the 20th session of the Intergovernmental Committee, held at the Red Fort in New Delhi from 8 to 13 December 2025.

Delegates from 194 Member States were present. Deepavali is the 16th Indian element on the list. India had nominated it for the 2024-25 cycle.

4.2 Who keeps the festival alive?

Deepavali supports livelihoods and traditional skills across the country. Potters, lantern makers, florists, sweet-makers, jewellers, textile artisans and small businesses see more economic activity during the festival.

- **Inscribed:** 10 December 2025.
- **Place:** Red Fort, New Delhi, 20th session.
- **Indian elements on the list:** Deepavali is the 16th.

Quick check 4. True or false: Deepavali was India's 16th element on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list. *(True or False?)*

See answer ↓

What record did Ayodhya set in 2025?

5 Ayodhya's 2025 Record

5.1 What happened in Ayodhya in 2025?

On 19 October 2025, the ninth Deepotsav lit 26,17,215 diyas at 56 ghats of Ayodhya, including Ram Ki Paidi. Uttar Pradesh achieved the Guinness World Record.

A second record was set at the Saryu river. 2,128 Vedacharyas performed the Maha Aarti and recited shlokas.

- **Date:** 19 October 2025, the ninth Deepotsav.
- **Diyas:** 26,17,215.
- **Where:** 56 ghats, including Ram Ki Paidi.
- **Aarti:** 2,128 Vedacharyas on the Saryu banks.

> **Quick check 5.** True or false: Ayodhya's 2025 Deepotsav lit more than 26 lakh diyas. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: newsonair.gov.in

Remember this

- **Meaning:** Deepavali is a row of lamps; light over darkness.
- **Five days:** Dhanteras, Naraka Chaturdashi, Lakshmi-Ganesha Puja, visiting day, Bhai Dooj.
- **Jains:** Mahavira’s Nirvana at Pavapuri.
- **UNESCO:** inscribed 10 December 2025, India’s 16th element.

Explain it back: Name two stories behind Diwali and say what idea they share.

Practice MCQs

1. What does the word "Diwali" (Deepavali) literally mean in Sanskrit?

A. A season of harvest

B. A row of chariots

C. A row of lamps

D. A festival of colours

See answer ↓

2. When was Deepavali inscribed on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity?

A. 17 October 2003

B. 10 December 2025

C. 26 January 2024

D. 8 March 2025

See answer ↓

3. Which day of the Diwali festival recalls Lord Krishna's victory over Narakasura?

A. Naraka Chaturdashi

B. Lakshmi-Ganesha Puja

C. Bhai Dooj

D. Dhanteras

See answer ↓

4. Where did Lord Mahavira attain Nirvana, according to Jain tradition?

A. Kushinagar

B. Sarnath

C. Bodh Gaya

D. Pavapuri

See answer ↓

5. Where was the 20th UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee session held, at which Deepavali was inscribed?

A. Konark Sun Temple, Odisha

B. Taj Mahal, Agra

C. Qutub Minar, Delhi

D. Red Fort, New Delhi

See answer ↓

6. On which day of the five-day Diwali festival is the Lakshmi-Ganesha Puja performed?

A. Second day

B. Third day

C. Fifth day

D. First day

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **C.** Deepavali comes from "deep" (a clay lamp) and "avali" (a row) -- literally, a row of lamps. ↑ Q1
2. **B.**
   Deepavali was inscribed on 10 December 2025. The decision came at the 20th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee in New Delhi.
   ↑ Q2
3. **A.**
   Naraka Chaturdashi recalls Krishna's victory over Narakasura. It stands for the end of evil.
   ↑ Q3
4. **D.**
   Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankar, attained Nirvana on Deepavali at Pavapuri. Jains mark the day as Nirvana Day.
   ↑ Q4
5. **D.**
   The session met at the Red Fort in New Delhi from 8 to 13 December 2025.
   ↑ Q5
6. **B.**
   The third day is the highlight of Deepavali. Families perform the Lakshmi-Ganesha Puja.
   ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** Different traditions link it to Rama, the Pandavas, Krishna's victory over Narakasura, Lakshmi and Mahavira. ↑ 1
2. **True.** The third day is the highlight of Deepavali. ↑ 2
3. **True.** He attained Nirvana at Pavapuri on Deepavali. ↑ 3
4. **True.** PIB records it as the 16th Indian element. ↑ 4
5. **True.** The count was 26,17,215. ↑ 5
6. **Think it through.** Both are about light and goodness winning over darkness and evil. That is why a lamp is the symbol of the festival. ↑ 6

7. **Think it through.** Light is a simple symbol. Each tradition adds its own story to it. ↑ 7

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