

Celebrating a festive tradition that illuminates and unites

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Since times immemorial, the enthronement of Indian Kings and Emperors have been held during Diwali, the festival of lights. The enthronement ceremony of His Majesty

Emperor Naruhito coinciding with this festival is indeed a supreme blessing of the heavens.

Indian festivals are inextricably intertwined with spirituality. Festivities such as birthdays and anniversaries are celebrated to mark our victory over the lower self. Festivals also mark the time and seasons of our own spiritual progress. The higher self allows us to understand that all festivals benefit humanity. Each festival symbolizes spiritual aspects and spurs each person's spiritual march in life with full faith and confidence for the evolution of oneself.

"Happy Diwali" is a universal greeting used to celebrate the festival of lights. From the very name of Dipawali, it is where divine effulgence is manifested. Dipawali means the array of lights. Tamasma Jyotirgamaya is an Upanishadic prayer that means where there is darkness, light is needed.

What is darkness? Sorrow is a part of darkness, along with lack of peace, loss, disappointment and lack of enthusiasm. To get rid of the darkness of sorrow, you have to light the lamp of happiness; to dispel the darkness of disease, you have to install the light of health.

To be rid of the darkness of losses and failures, one must usher in the light of prosperity. To get rid of this darkness, one has to usher in the light of prosperity through *adi shakti*, the primordial energy force in every human being. This energy is termed *om*, which permeates and animates the physical world of matter. It is the power of *prana shakti* (vibration) and *bhava* the life force which activate every part of the human body. The goddess Mahalakshmi, the presiding deity of Diwali, also known as Guanyin in Chinese and Kannon-sama in Japanese, symbolizes this power. The Mahalakshmi principle accounts for good, happy and auspicious happenings in the world.

Diwali is the festival of one's inner illumination. The illumination of one's intellect by the indwelling light (spirit) bestows transcendental unity, which symbolizes this festival of lights.

Diwali is the most important and largest festival in India as it contributes significantly to economic, cultural and social sectors. With immense contribution to India's gross domestic product, Indian merchants and businesses commemorate

it as the start of a new year, closing their fiscal year and having a fresh start on their trade.

Diwali is observed as the day of discarding worn-out prejudices and adopting new habits of love and mutual respect. It is the rejuvenation of one's attitude toward one's kith and kin, brothers and sisters of all creeds and nations, the hanging of festoons of friendship and fraternity over the doorsill of the heart. This makes Diwali truly meaningful and fruitful for all countries.

Indians overseas have embraced citizens of all countries in the powerful festivities of Diwali. In Japan, Diwali began with Indian homes in the Meiji Era and today marks the 17th anniversary of public celebration jointly with the city of Yokohama. Admission is free for all to experience the fascinations of Indian culture. All readers are cordially invited to share the joys of Diwali in Yokohama 2019 in Yamashita park.