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# Celebrating Diwali

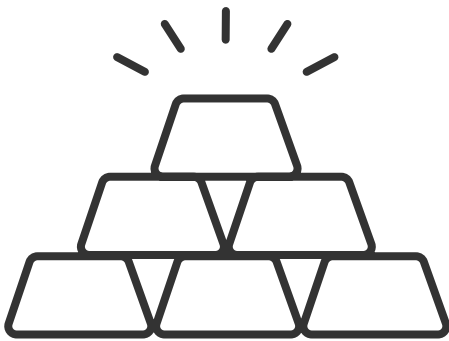
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This year, Diwali falls on 24 October 2022.

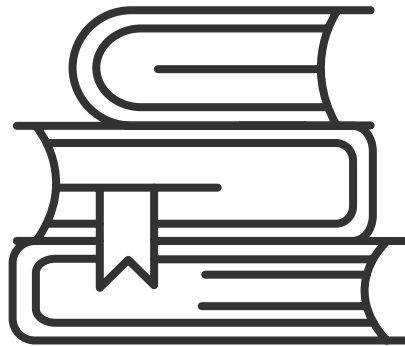
## What is Diwali?

Diwali is a colourful, religious festival celebrated by millions of Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and some Buddhists across the world every year. The celebrations take place over five days in October or November, depending on the cycle of the moon. The five days of the festival include:

- Dhanteras, the day of fortune
- Naraka Chaturdasi, the day of knowledge
- Lakshmi Puja, the day of light
- Padwa, the new year
- Bhai Dooj, the day of love between brothers and sisters.



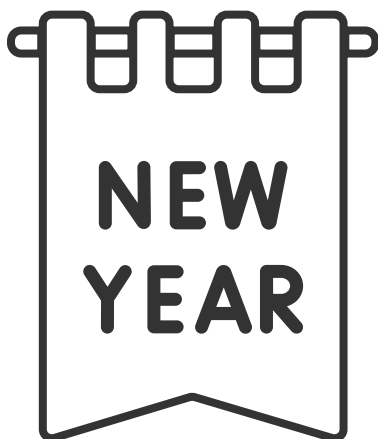
Dhanteras, the day of fortune



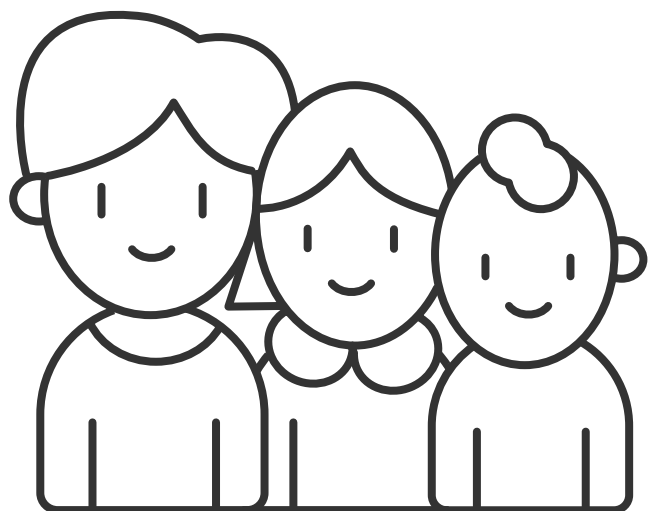
Naraka Chaturdasi, the day of knowledge



Lakshmi Puja, the day of light



Padwa, the new year



Bhai Dooj, the day of love between brothers and sisters.

## Where does the name 'Diwali' come from?

The word 'Diwali' comes from the Sanskrit word 'Deepavali', which means 'rows of lighted lamps'. During Diwali, many people light candles and clay lamps called diyas and, as a result, it is commonly referred to as the festival of lights.



Candles and clay lamps called diyas

## Why do people celebrate Diwali?

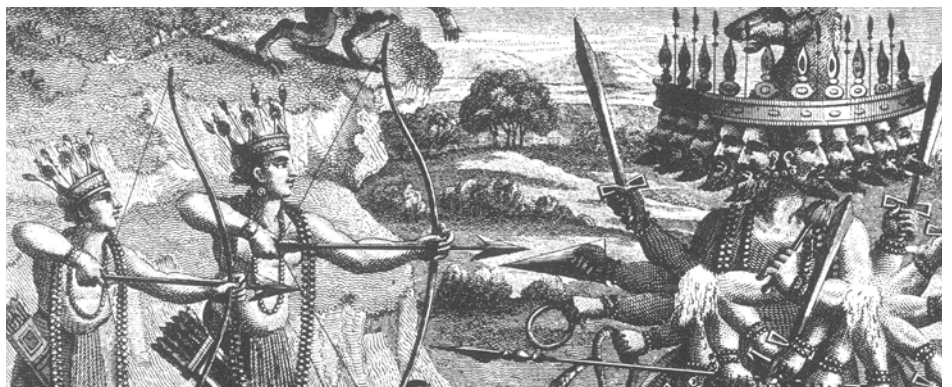
Celebrations vary depending on religion and region but Diwali is a joyous time in which people celebrate good defeating evil and hope triumphing over despair.

For many, the festival of Diwali welcomes in the new year and honours Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth, luxury and beauty. Also worshipped during Diwali is Ganesh, the Hindu god of wisdom who many believe has the ability to remove people's problems to help them to succeed. People worship Lakshmi and Ganesh and hope that they will bless them with fortune and good luck for the year ahead.



Ganesha (left) and Lakshmi (right) sitting on throne

Diwali also celebrates the story of Rama, a brave warrior who saved his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana. A story told during the celebrations, it reminds people that love can conquer all obstacles and good deeds are always better than bad actions.



Rama, aided by Hanuman, confronts the hundred-headed demon, Ravana

# Fact File

## How do people celebrate?

The word 'Diwali' means 'row of lighted lamps' and it is traditional to light candles and clay lamps called diyas during the festival. Light represents triumph over darkness, good defeating evil and knowledge over ignorance, so people often decorate with lots of lights in the hope that the goddess Lakshmi will visit their home and bless them with good fortune. In the lead up to Diwali, many people also clean, de-clutter and redecorate, as they believe it brings positive energy to their homes and Lakshmi will visit if a property is tidy and welcoming. Additionally, entrances often display Rangoli designs, which are vibrant patterns made from coloured powders, flowers and lights, in order to entice Lakshmi into the home.

People also celebrate by spending time with friends and family, exchanging gifts, performing religious rituals, lighting fireworks and sharing stories. Food also plays a big part in the festivities and people come together to eat sweets and for delicious feasts.

## Gold and Diwali

For a festival that honours Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, it is not surprising that gold is a popular gift to give at Diwali and gold plays a part in some of the stories told during the festival too.

During Dhanteras, which is the first day of the celebrations, the story of King Hima's 16-year-old son is told in which, according to mythology, King Hima's son was predicted to die from a snakebite on the fourth day of his marriage. On that particular day, his new wife did everything she could in order to keep her husband awake and safe – she sang songs and told stories to prevent him from falling asleep. She also laid a heap of gold outside their door. When Yama, the god of death, arrived disguised as a serpent, the gold distracted him from biting the young prince. In the morning, Yama slid away and the prince lived thanks to his clever young wife. As a result, it is now considered very good luck to give the gift of gold during Diwali, especially on Dhanteras.



The Royal Mint has minted Lakshmi on a range of gold bars



Dhanteras, the day of fortune



Rama, Sita and Hanuman Hindu Gods

## Ramayana: The Story of Rama and Sita

One of the main stories told and celebrated during Diwali is that of Rama and Sita. Rama was a kind warrior who lived with his beautiful wife Sita and one day, whilst walking in the forest with her brother Lakshmana, an evil demon king with ten heads and twenty arms called Ravana kidnapped Sita.

Ravana carried Sita away in his flying chariot but Sita left a trail of her jewellery for Rama to follow. Rama followed the trail and met Hanuman, the god of strength, courage and perseverance, and asked him and his monkey army to help rescue Sita. Hanuman agreed to help and called on his army to find where Ravana was keeping Sita.

After a long search, the monkeys found Sita imprisoned on an island. The monkeys built a bridge out of stones across to the island, Rama rushed over it and a great battle between Rama and Ravana ensued. Using a bow and arrow given to him by the gods, Rama struck and killed Ravana with a magic arrow. Rama and Sita were reunited and people lit lamps to guide the pair back home.

During Diwali, the lighting of candles and lamps to symbolise good defeating evil is a reminder of Rama and Sita's triumphant journey home.



The lighting of candles during  
Diwali celebrations



Painting of Hindu Deities

## Hindu Deities

Hindus worship many different gods and goddesses who are all thought to represent different things. Here are just a few examples ...

**Brahma** – Considered the creator of all things, together with Shiva and Vishnu, Brahma forms the Trimurti and these three gods are thought to embody the different aspects of creation.

**Ganesh** – Believed to be the son of Shiva and Parvati, Ganesh, also known as Ganesha, is the god of wisdom and the remover of obstacles, who is therefore able to help people to succeed. He has the head of an elephant and the body of a human.

**Vishnu** – As the protector and preserver of the universe, Vishnu is thought to appear in various forms in order to defend Earth and maintain stability.

**Shiva** – Seen as a source of both good and evil, Shiva holds the power to both destroy the universe and recreate it. Although commonly known as Shiva, he has many other names including Mahadeva, Pashupati and Vishwanath.

**Indra** – Often seen holding a thunderbolt and thought to be responsible for storms, Indra is the king of heaven.

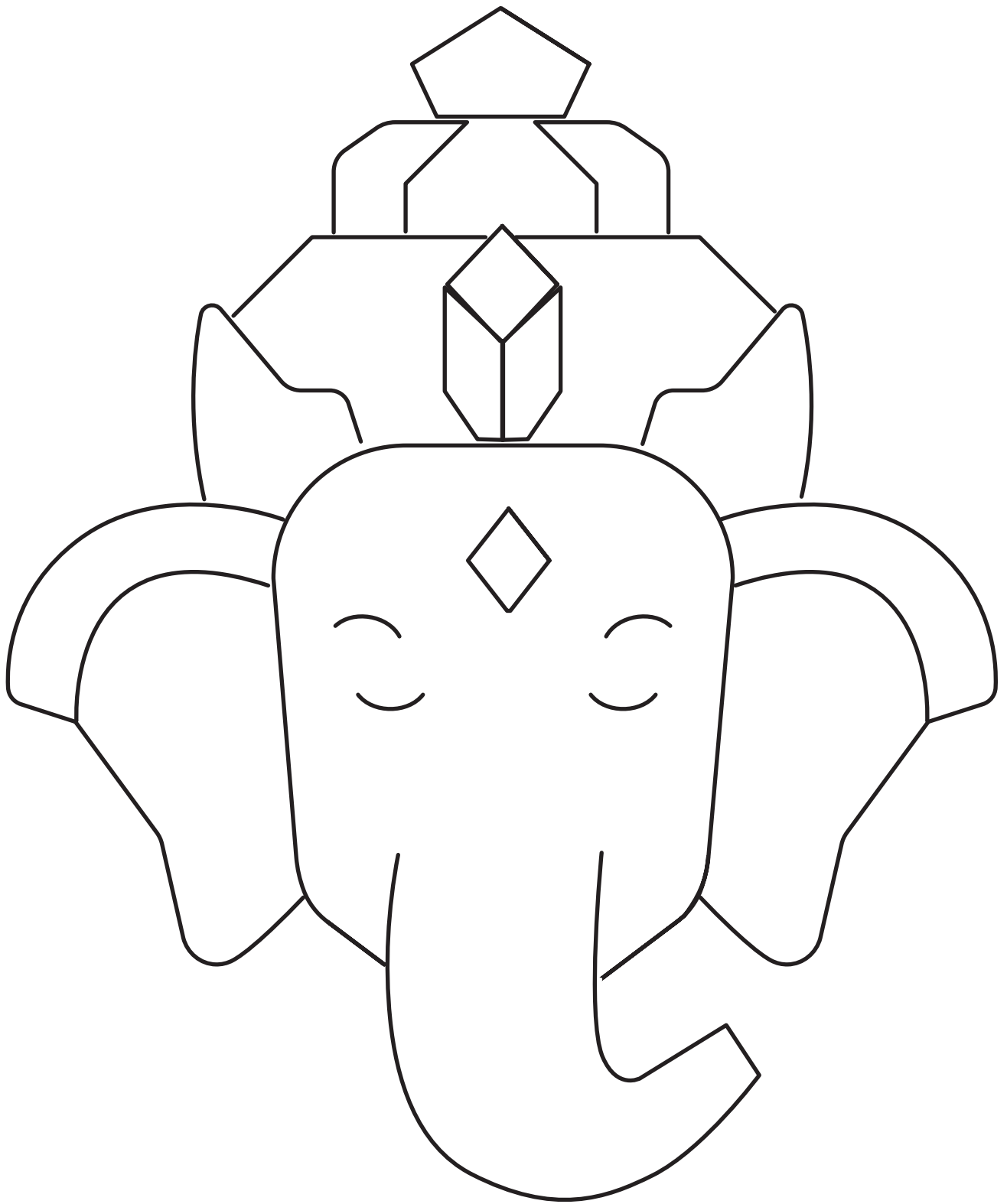
**Saraswati** – Often depicted with a swan and a peacock, Saraswati is the wife of Brahma and the goddess of knowledge and of the arts, especially music.

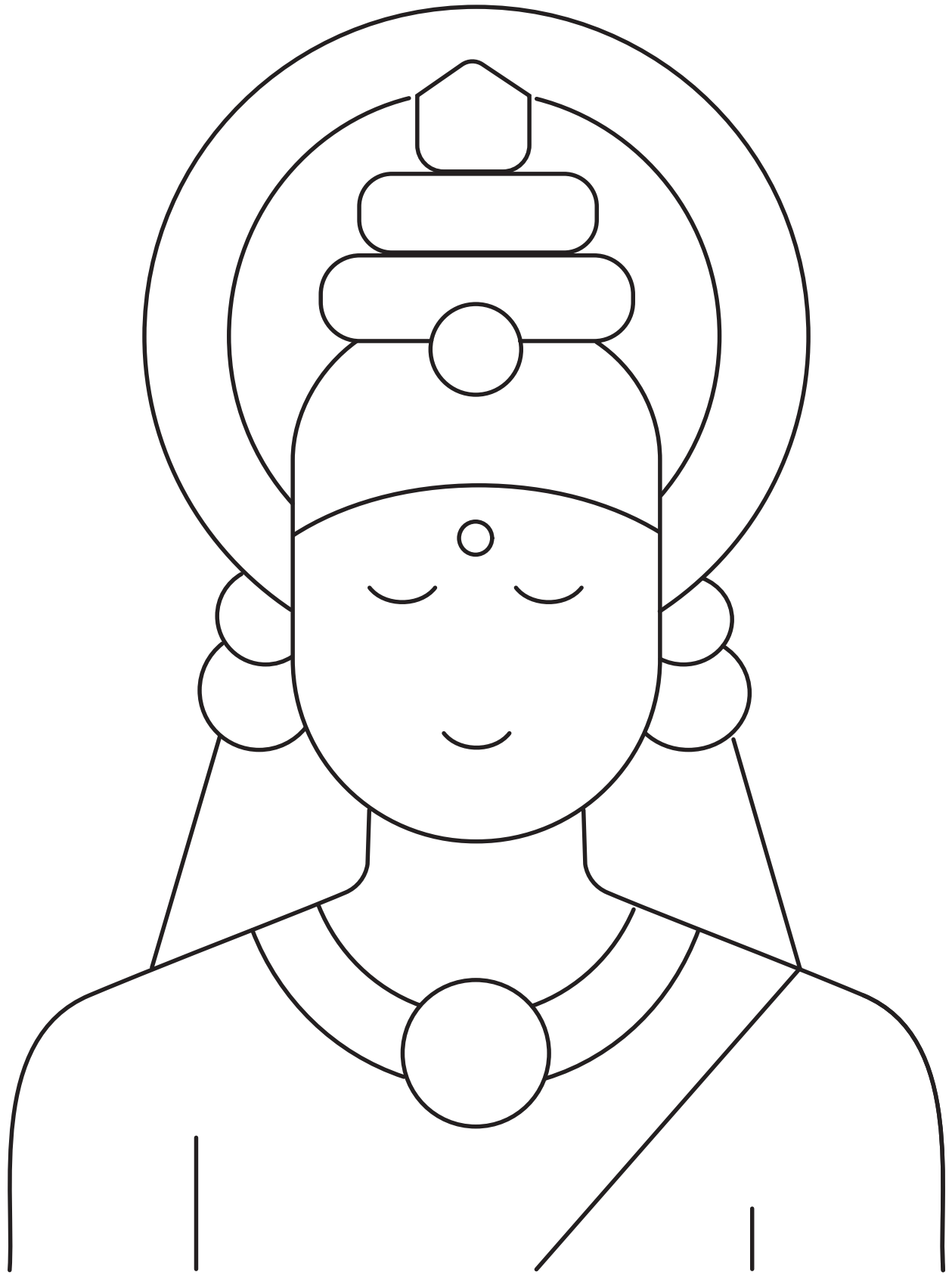
**Lakshmi** – Particularly worshipped during Diwali, Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth, beauty and prosperity and is one of the most popular deities.

**Rama** – Thought to be the perfect embodiment of humankind, Rama is the god of truth and features in the epic story of Ramayana and his wife Sita that is told and celebrated during Diwali.

**Parvati** – Parvati is the wife of Shiva, the mother of Ganesh and the goddess of fertility, love, marriage and harmony.

**Krishna** – Frequently depicted playing a flute, Krishna is the god of protection, compassion and tenderness.









The content in this pack was developed by the team at The Royal Mint Museum. For more information on these resources, including additional teaching materials and in-depth teachers' notes, please visit [royalmintmuseum.org.uk/learning](https://royalmintmuseum.org.uk/learning)

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