

## **Some Rituals and Customs followed during Diwali**

The approach to Diwali is sometimes different in different households in different countries – below are some general rituals followed around the world.

**Card playing** - very long time ago people played cards, believing that gambling with money would impress goodness of wealth and bring property. This trend is slowly coming back as it is seen as a good excuse to have family/friend gatherings.

**Rangoli art of drawings and patterns on floor.** On the day before diwali, ladies make beautiful rangoli designs to welcome Goddess Lakshmi. The tradition of rangoli started in Maharashtra which spreads to other parts of the world within Hindu communities. This is very popular with children and many communities have competitions as a platform to showcase art and talent.

**Fireworks** have a special significance during diwali celebrations. Firecrackers not only remove the darkness, but also mark the celebrations of the victory of good over the evil. They are burst as an expression of obeisance to the heavens for the attainment of health, wealth, knowledge, peace and prosperity.

**Exchange of gifts and sweets** is an integral part of all the Indian festivals. During Diwali many exchange gifts and sweets with family and friends. Markets are full of buyers and shopkeepers tend to do booming business. The shopkeepers attract customers with massive discounts and sales. People buy new clothes just for diwali.

**Oil lamps** - traditionally it was an oil lamp that were used, but these days are candles and lamps. According to the Hindu mythology, when Rama returned to Ayodhya the entire kingdom was lighted up by oil lamps. The flame of a lamp has two significant qualities , one is to banish darkness and the upward movement of the flame denotes the path to wisdom and path of divinity.

**Gharonda** - On the eve of Diwali children in India make small mud houses known as gharonda. This is a toy houses made with bricks and plastered with mud and later painted and decorated with limestone. Idols of Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha are kept inside the 'mud house'.

**Cleaning** - Diwali is a time for thorough cleaning of households and business premises. Business and shop owners arrange for the worship of Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha in a clean environment amidst display of lights and fireworks. The general idea is to remove the dampness and staleness gathered over the previous year. Cleaning of house hold is not complete without purging the dirt from within us. One should try and start afresh in their life by following the path of honesty and sincerity in daily chores.