Thanksgiving prayers and pujas

Deepavali, also known as the ‘Festival of Lights’, is celebrated in Singapore and around the world. For many Hindu families, performing prayers and pujas (prayer rituals) before the deity Lakshmi is an important part of the celebrations. As the goddess of prosperity, fertility and good fortune,1 farming families traditionally gave thanks for the harvest, while merchants sought blessings for the financial year ahead. 2 The morning of Deepavali involves thanksgiving prayers and pujas conducted at the family shrine, where young family members receive blessings from their elders.3

Visiting temples, family and friends

After performing prayers and pujas at home, families visit the temple to join communal offerings and prayers. Temple prayers are led by a priest and food is often provided.4 At dusk, family and friends gather and light diya (oil lamps) to brighten windows and doorways.5

Did you know…

Lighting oil lamps (diya) is a traditional activity that gives the ‘Festival of Lights’ its name.5

In South India, it is believed the demon king Naraka, who is likened to darkness, was defeated by Lord Krishna to bring brightness to people’s lives. In Northern India, firecrackers and oil lamps celebrate Lord Rama of Ayuthya’s victory against demon Ravana.6 Lights displayed during Deepavali celebrate these mythical victories and signify that only light can counter darkness.7

At night, when it is time to visit and welcome family and friends, oil lamps are lit to invite fortune and the goddess Lakshmi into people’s homes.8

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Rangoli is a form of floor design used to decorate doorways and welcome deities during Deepavali.9

Colourful patterns are created on the ground using rice, flour, flower petals, powder or coloured sand to symbolise prosperity and prevent evil from entering the household.10 The bright and intricate rangoli designs make use of symmetry and continuous lines as any gaps or break in the patterns are believed to allow evil spirits to enter.11

The decorative patterns play an important role in welcoming guests during the festive season12 and the designs are traditionally passed down from each generation, often by female family members.13

Did you know...

Taking an oil bath very early in the morning is a traditional practice by many Hindus during Deepavali. Three drops of oil are placed on the forehead before the morning bath, and the ritual is believed to be as significant as taking a bath in India’s sacred Ganges river.14

Rangoli designs are also an act of charity and are traditionally made of edible items to feed insects and birds.15 A new rangoli design may therefore be redrawn daily during the festive season to keep the patterns bright and prominent.16

Look out for our U.n.I Bites in 2021, where we cover the types of food that are part of the Deepavali celebrations.