



Balvihar Youth Newsletter

Volume 1
Edition 56



Diwali

By: Vaishalee Elango

Photos: Kavita Sharda



Diwali is one the many holidays celebrated in India. It is also known as the festival of lights. Indians all over the world celebrate Diwali with their friends and family. It is a holiday of devotion to the goddess Lakshmi and is celebrated in many

different ways.

In many parts of India and Nepal, it is the homecoming of Lord Ram of Ayodhya, after a 14-year exile in the forest, after he defeated the demonic Ravana. The people of Ayodhya (the capital of Rama's kingdom) welcomed Ram by lighting rows (avali) of lamps (deepa), thus its name: Deepavali. This word, in due course, became Diwali in Hindi and Dipawali in Nepali. But, in South and East Indian languages, the word did not undergo any change, and hence the festival is called Deepavali in eastern and southern part of India. There are many different observances of the holiday across India and Nepal. Here is a picture of the temple on Diwali.

The Killing of Narakasura: Celebrated as Narak Chaturdashi, one day before Diwali day, it commemorates the killing of Narakasura, an evil demon who created havoc, by Lord Krishna's wife Satyabhama. This happened in the Dwapar Yuga during this time of Lord Krishna's avatar. In another version, the demon was killed by Lord Krishna (Lord Krishna provokes his wife Satyabhama to kill Narakasura by pretending to be injured by the demon. Narakasura can only be killed by a woman) himself. Before Narakasura's death, he requested a boon from Satyabhama (believed to be an Avatar of Bhudevi, that everyone should celebrate his death with colorful light. Above is a picture of Diwali at the temple.

Birth of Goddess Lakshmi: According to the Puranas, the goddess of Wealth, Prosperity and Luck Lakshmi was born from the churning of the Milk Ocean, along with other magical beings and objects including Amrit, Kamadhenu, Chintamani, Halahal aka Poison, etc. She was sought by both the Devas (Gods) and Danavas (Demons) but she chose Vishnu as her husband.

Peer Pressure and Family Expectations

By: Selina Swaminathan

To me, peer pressure is when your friends or classmates want you to do something that you are not comfortable doing. I don't really face any major peer pressures with my friends and people at school, because they know that if I don't want to do something, they need to respect that and move on from it. I have three big expectations from my parents. One, get good grade. Two, keep my room clean. Three, be nice to others especially my brothers. For my Mom, getting good grades is all A'. Nothing less. For my Dad, get-



ting good grades is if I understand that materials and try my best. My Mom wants my room to be SPOT-TLESS. Both my Mom and Dad are strong on respecting others especially my elders. My Dad is the only child, so he thinks that we should appreciate the fact that we have each other; my brothers and me. My Mom thinks that I should be a little nicer to them and talk to them every one and a while. These are the peer pressures and expectations that I deal with.

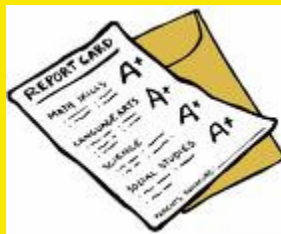
Cultural Differences

By: Meera Zassenhaus

Several cultural differences exist between the Indian and American cultures. While neither can be considered "better" beliefs than the other, they each focus on a different aspect in their child's life. For example, Indian parents generally have higher expectations regarding their children's grade and education. A grade unacceptable for most Indian children would be considered perfectly acceptable in the eyes of an American parent. For example, American children and their parents

are often satisfied when receiving a B, but the Indian students and at my school feel disappointed and upset.

Furthermore, Indian and American parents differ on career choices. During my Balvihar youth group class, we asked each pupil how their parents would react if they chose to take a career in



the Arts (dancing, painting, etc). The general consensus was several variations of "out of the question." Indian parents often take it for granted that their child will go into the field of "engineering," "doctoring," "law," or other respectable and high paying jobs. On the other hand, American parents are more accepting of free choice and exploration. Their children often experiment with different fields of any kind. Both are highly different approaches to choosing a career.

Trip to the Hindu Temple

By: Kavita Sharda

The trip to the temple was refreshing. When I say it was "refreshing" I mean that it was educational because I learned some things I didn't know about temples. For example the gold spools at the top of the temples symbolize how many deities there are inside the temple. The other refreshing thing was that it was just nice to go to the temple, it felt good. At the temple, it was easier to remember information that Hamsa Auntie was teaching us because we were

able to look at the deities and discuss the details about them right there. If we were in the classroom we would have to picture the deity by memory which would not be as fun or interesting. When we were at the temple Auntie went into great detail about the details about the deities and ceremonies and also the architecture of the temple which made everything interesting. Also the Jain prayer room was very peaceful and quiet. It felt very serene with the white walls

and no talking, I liked it. Also the food at the temple was great! Thank you for buying the food!

*Vishnu Sahasranāma means "thousands names of Vishnu". I do not have all thousand so here are 17 names: Achyuta, Ananta, Kesava, Narayana, Madhava, Govinda, Vishnu, Madhusudhana, Trivikrama, Vamana, Sridhara, Hrshikesa, Padmanabha, Damodara, Shiva, Rudra, and Shambu

Community Projects

By: Ananya Benegal

We have had two very successful Community Projects so far this year- a clothes drive and a can drive. Thank you to everyone who donated!



Clothing

Drive We collected many clothes that will

help numerous people. These clothes we received were sent to St. Patrick's Center.



Can Drive

This can drive was a competition to see which class could donate the most. Congratulations to

class 2A, who collected 43 cans! We received the grand total of 205 cans. The cans will be given to the Circle of Concern.

Thanks again to those who donated!



Interview w/ Balvihar

By: Meera Zassenhaus and Shalini Subbarao

Recently, Shalini and I interviewed a diverse group of students who participate in Balvihar. When asked what their opinion of Balvihar was, the compiled answers seemed to indicate that the majority of students greatly enjoyed it. J One student quoted, "I like the clay projects. They are lots of fun. I also like talking with my friends." Chatting with friends popped up quite frequently in response to students' favorite thing to do. Students chose

Yoga and Bhajans as the two favorite activities in addition to class time. However, if they could change one thing about Balvihar, several interviewees claimed that Balvihar was a teensy, weensy, bit too long. "Balvihar is a little long," one student quotes, "but that's okay, because that gives me more time to play with my friends!" I hope they are still paying attention! Finally, I asked the students what they thought of the Diwali celebra-

tion. "I LOVED THE FIRE-CRACKERS!" was the overwhelming and enthusiastic response. Several complained about the length of the prayer, but as one student quoted, "the prayer was a bit long, but the food and firecrackers afterwards made it worth it." Overall, Balvihar appears to be an experience enjoyed by all interviewed students. Yay!

Balvihar newsletter
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About this newsletter:
Balvihar Youth Newsletter is made by the Y1 group of Balvihar. Each kid has participated into making the newsletter a success, and they have various jobs like photographing, publishing, etc.
The newsletter focuses on big events that have happened at Balvihar, which is the main topic of this newsletter.
The newsletter is published 2-3 times a year.

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