

## *The Values & Practices that define Diwali.*

### **Discipline:**

Deepavali or Diwali starts in the early morning hours, about an hour and half before sunrise.

This time of day is named 'Brahma-muhurta' literally translates as time (period) of creation or creativity. Yoga teachings states that during this time of day, the mind, body, and energy consciousness is said to be attuned towards spiritual learning or yoga practices. Deepavali could be used as a New Year Day or new beginning to start a mental, physical, or spiritual practice to instill more discipline and productivity into our daily life. Any day of the year could be a start towards this practice of balance, why not Diwali?

### **Balance:**

Essentially Diwali or Deepavali celebrates the victory of light over darkness, day over night, virtue over vice or any opposites, with the full awareness that both are two sides of a coin; propagated at a time when people were still charting the intricate balances of human co-existence with nature. Today, amidst the global change in climate and weather patterns, it is more evident and need of the hour than ever, that we revisit the intricate dance of our physical co-existence with nature and Mother Earth. Ayurvedic (Eastern school of medicine) and Yoga philosophy holds that there are 3 'gunas' or qualities within each being animate or inanimate that is predominant at any instant and they are termed 'tamas' (apathy or destruction), 'rajas' (passion or attachment), and 'satvik' (liberated or enlightened). These states of being are ever changing and the objective is to be find a balance between these energy states to move towards freedom and liberation of mind, body, and consciousness through purity in thoughts, words and deeds that become habit and character.

The folklore of Diwali celebrates the victory of Lord Rama and return to his Kingdom in Ayodhya in the North of India and in the South of India it is called Deepavali and represents the victory of Lord Krishna over a destructive entity Narakasura that was causing harm to all living beings. In the province of West Bengal in India, which is to the east of India, Goddess Kali is worshipped and celebrated during Diwali. The festivities begin with day of 'Dhanteras' celebrated two days before the day of Diwali, invoking the Goddess Lakshmi, who is worshipped as the deity for wealth or prosperity in Hindu mythology, for a productive and fruitful year ahead. In Northern India Diwali is celebrated over 5 days starting with Dhanteras and in South India, it is the usually three days, with the day of Deepavali celebrated as the day of significance.

### **Harmony:**

Diwali spreads across boundaries, religions, faith, caste, color, creed, and all barriers to unite everyone to the message of universal harmony and celebration of siblinghood and collective consciousness. Diwali is not limited to Hinduism as a celebration but is also celebrated by people of Jain faith, Sikh community, and some sects of Buddhism, especially the Newar Buddhists in Nepal. It is celebrated across Southeast Asia as well as globally. Leicester city in United Kingdom has one of the biggest Diwali celebrations in the Western hemisphere. Thus, amongst all our diversities lies the strength of unity when we choose to come together to celebrate as one.

## **Divinity:**

We are compassionate and empathic to the whole wide, yet quite critical of ourselves. Healthcare sector is a field where one can easily realize that divinity is a quality within oneself and not without or external. All of us, irrespective of the nature or specifics of our job, may have experienced the happiness that comes with caring for someone other than us. Yet, what about, oneself or One's Self? It is when we truly look within that we start to see, it is when we forgive ourselves that we begin to forgive, it is when we start to love ourselves unconditionally, that we love the world collectively. In Eastern philosophy, one of the main Mahavakyas (short, complete, statements) from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad holds forth the concept: 'Aham Brahmasmi'- translates to "I am Divine".

When we truly let go of our ego identification, realization dawns that we are one and the same part of a whole. Then the divinity within awakens and let our light shine forth, through our acts of kindness, compassion, willingness, ability, love or joy in caring for others. Anyone and everyone can do this, which is what Aham Brahmasmi means, that the microcosm and the macrocosm are one and the same and all we need is to practice igniting that inner spark to let our light shine. This is symbolized by lighting of lamps on Diwali, to signify lighting that inner lamp. Imagine if all of humanity chose to ignite their inner lights, what would be the level of Lux or illuminance?

## **Sharing:**

The true purpose of Diwali is to spark that inner light and divinity. This can happen through the practice of humility. Humility in turn stems from kindness, love and joy. Kindness can start with acts of selflessness. Which in turn can start with acts of sharing. Diwali is truly a time to share and/or gift.

From sweets, new clothes, or any form of gifts or generous acts that brings happiness to the people around and in family is a way of celebrating that sharing.

The poet Kahlil Gibran's says in The Prophet: "You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give." Those of us who work in healthcare, education or other service professions can relate how the very act of giving your time to someone, can brighten up one's day. Diwali is a day to share, not just one's material possessions but one's time and love to near and dear. What would you like to share, do, or partake with your team or your organization this Diwali? It need only be to wish each other well or reach out to a family member, do something you have always meant to do or share, but never quite got around to sharing or finishing. Call, text, write... or in your heart, wish yourself, your family, your team, your organization, and the whole wide world, well. Share your energy.

## **Community:**

Diwali signifies the importance of community building and joyful interactions.

This Diwali we certainly can think about how to be more environmentally conscious and be socially responsible with our celebrations. Minimize noise pollution, be kind to our pets and other living beings, reduce wastage and serve the needs where it matters.

Pause, reflect on our communities, the land we acknowledge and are thankful to be on, use our critical thinking abilities to make informed choices and ensure to drive sustainable change for posterity.

Diwali is a perfect time to build solidarity in existing relationships or foster new relationships towards a culture, community or society that can understand and explain to the coming generations the differences between ***Dharma*** (moral values: that which drives and differentiates between rights, responsibilities and duties), ***Artha*** (economic values), ***Kama*** (psychological values: materialistic v/s selflessness) **and** ***Moksha*** (spiritual values/ liberation or joyfulness).

These values are fundamental to the cohesiveness of threads that weave the fabric of human existence which elevates it to that magic carpet ride or the super-hero cape that can turn us ordinary humans, teams, and organizations into extra-ordinary ones.

