

# Diwali



## Article 30

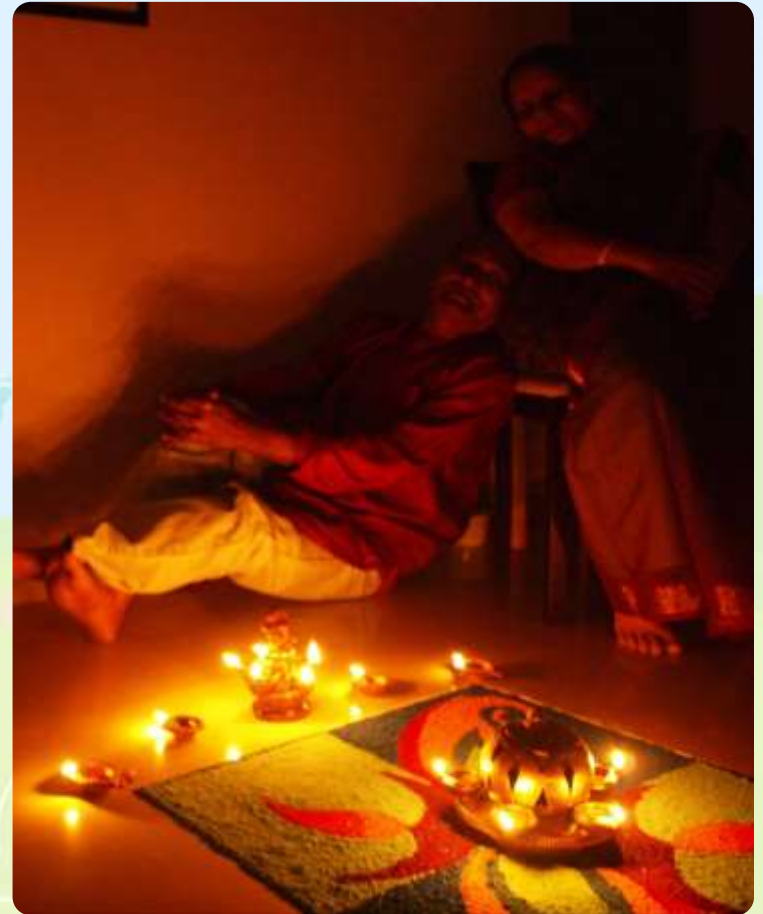
You have the right  
to practice your own  
religion.



Diwali is a very important holiday in India.

*It is a Hindu 'festival of lights' which celebrates the New Year.*

The word Diwali means *'row of lighted lamps'*.





# Celebrating Diwali

The festival usually honours Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.

Lamps are lit to help Lakshmi find her way into people's homes.

Lakshmi



Diya lamp

They also celebrate a Diwali legend, the story of the return of Rama and Sita to Rama's kingdom after fourteen years of exile.



# The Meaning of Diwali

The festival celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.

The legends that go with the festival differ depending on where you are:

- In northern India, Diwali celebrates *Rama and Sita's* return from exile.
- In Nepal, Diwali commemorates the victory of Lord Krishna over the demon king Narakaasura.
- In Bengal, it is associated with the goddess Kali.



Rama and Sita

# RAMA AND SITA

🌸 The Story of Diwali 🌸



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Prince Rama was a great warrior, and he had a beautiful wife named Sita.





Rama's stepmother did not want him to become king, for she hoped her own son would be king instead.

To get rid of Rama, she tricked the young prince's father into sending him away to the forest.



So Rama and Sita went to live there, in a tiny cottage.



Life was peaceful, until the day that Sita was spotted by the demon king, Ravana.

Ravana had twenty arms and ten heads. He had eyes as red as the brightest fire, and teeth as sharp as daggers.

"A beautiful princess!" he hissed. "I shall make her my wife!"



The next day, as Rama and Sita were out fetching water, they saw a deer.

"Could you catch it for me?" Sita asked her husband. "I would like to keep it as a pet."



But the deer was a trick, sent by the wicked demon.  
For as soon as Rama had gone deeper into the forest, chasing it, Ravana  
swooped down on Sita. He swept her up and away, over the treetops.

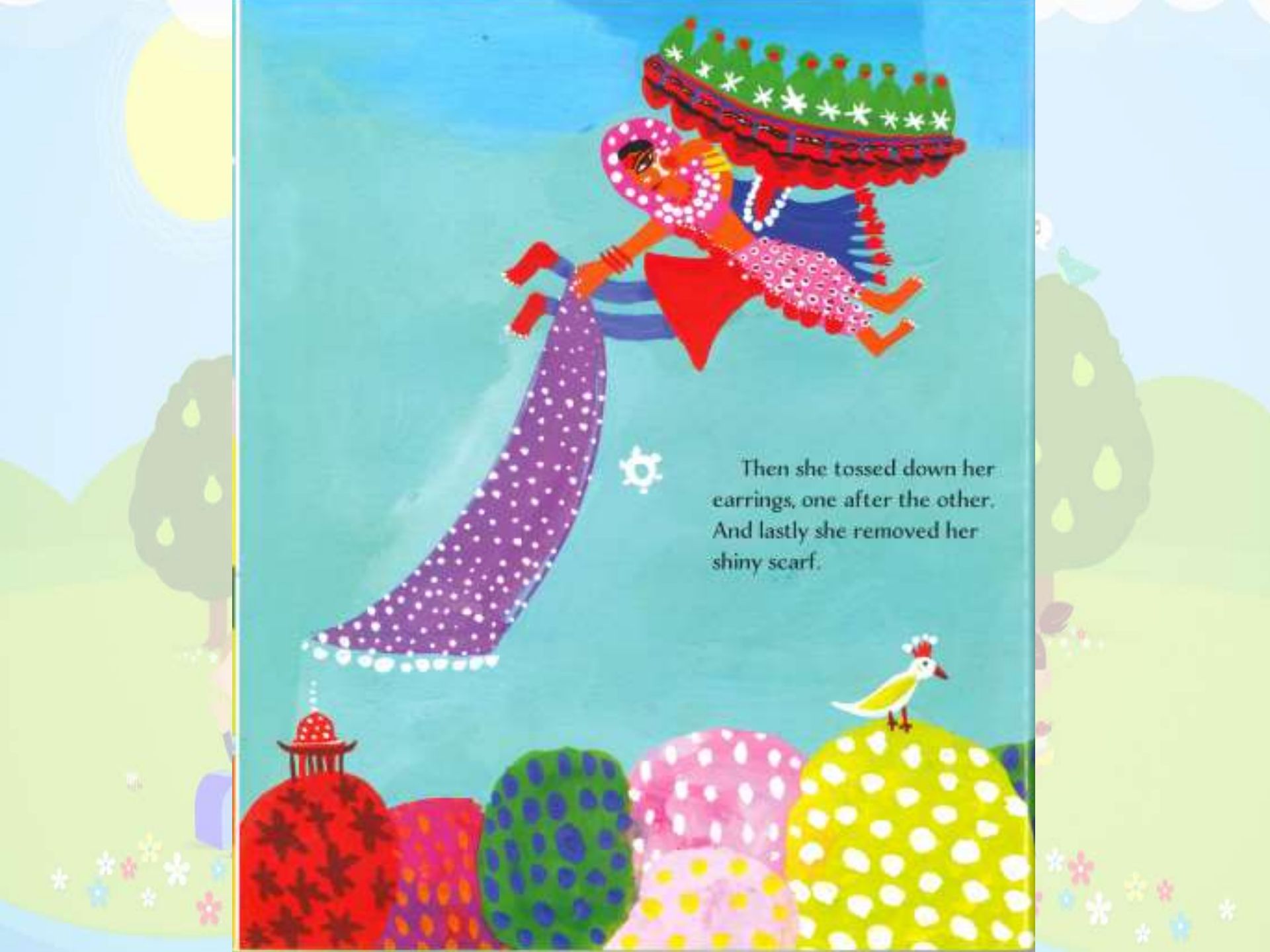


Sita was terrified, but she knew that she must leave a trail for her husband to follow.



So she pulled off her golden anklet and threw it to the ground below her.





Then she tossed down her earrings, one after the other. And lastly she removed her shiny scarf.

Below her in a tree, a little white monkey looked up  
and saw her jewels falling.

"The stars are falling from the sky!" he thought.







At last Rama caught up with the magical deer.  
But as soon as he touched it, the animal changed into a demon and  
took off into the air.

"It was all a trick!" cried the prince.  
He rushed back to the cottage, but his beautiful wife was nowhere to be seen.  
"The demons have taken Sita!" he moaned. "If it is the last thing I do in this life, I shall find her!"



He started to look for her. Deeper and deeper he went, into the very heart of the forest, until at last he saw something sparkle in the leaves.  
"Sita's golden anklet!" he cried.



"An earring!" he gasped, a moment later. "And another!"

A little further on he caught sight of something bright, fluttering in the trees.

"Sita's scarf!" he exclaimed. "The one I gave her on the day we were married!"



Suddenly, there before him was the little white monkey.  
He was Hanuman, the monkey king. He led Rama to a great cave,  
under a hill.



Hanuman had sent word to all the monkeys in the world that they must gather there.



"The demon, Garuda has stolen all your possessions. Tarsa and his wife are friends to the animals. We must find her!"



So the monkeys went off in every direction. They searched the forest,  
the mountain and the plain.







At last, Hanuman's group came to the edge of the land. There, far out to sea, stood an island, and as soon as the monkey king saw it, he knew that Sita was there.



The island was surrounded by massive rocks and stormy seas, and the other monkeys could see no way to get ashore.

But Hanuman was the son of the wind god. He climbed to the top of a hill, sucked in the wind all around him, then leapt out over the crashing waves.



The monkey king landed on the island and soon found Sita, near the palace of the evil demon.

"No!" he heard her cry. "I will not marry you, Ravana! It is Rama alone that I love!"



When Sita saw Hanuman, she knew straight away why he had come. "Catch!" she cried, tossing him a pearl from her hair. "Take this to my husband, to show him that I am still alive!"



Rama was overjoyed at the news.  
Hanuman called all the monkeys to gather at the shore, but the waves were growing even bigger, and they could see no way to get across.

"Build a bridge!" ordered the monkey king.



So they gathered rocks and grass, sand and soil.

They mixed them all together and built a giant bridge, all the way from the shore to the island.

Then they marched across, and the terrible battle with the demons began.

"I have come to rescue my wife!" shouted Rama, when at last he made it through to the palace.

"You will have to kill me first!" cried the demon king.





With a mighty swing of his sword, Rama sliced off one of his heads. But, to his horror, another one grew in its place!

Again and again Rama chopped, and again and again Ravana's heads reappeared.





His sword could do nothing. So Rama raised his bow.  
The gods of fire and wind guided the arrow and, in a burst of flame,  
it pierced Ravana's chest, killing him stone dead.





Rama went to find Sita, locked away in the depths of the palace:  
They hugged each other warmly, then came out and called a halt to  
the battle.

After thanking Hanuman and the monkeys, Rama and Sita returned to their own country to rule as king and queen.

The gods threw flowers from the sky, the people lined the streets with flags, and in every house an oil lamp was put in the window to welcome them home.

They ruled, happily and well, for many years, until it was time for them to leave this life on earth and return to heaven.





And that is the story of Rama and Sita.  
It shows us how goodness and truth can win over evil, as one little  
oil lamp can brighten the darkest of nights.  
And every year, at the festival of Diwali, Hindu people light small  
oil lamps, or divas, inside their homes, to remember.

# Learning Time!

Throughout the month, your teachers will spend some time looking at the meaning of Diwali and how it is celebrated.

It will be a time to share how you feel and think about why it is important to be tolerant and respectful to those who have different faiths or beliefs.



# Reflection

This is our school,  
Let peace dwell here,  
Let the rooms be full of  
contentment.  
Let love abide here,  
Love of one another,  
Love of mankind,  
Love of life itself.  
Let us remember



That as many hands build a  
house,  
So many hearts make a school  
Help us to learn, play and share  
together.

We hope our school will be place  
of great discovery, adventure and  
creativity.

May it be a place where we love to  
learn and where we learn to love,  
A place where everyone is  
respected and all are deeply  
valued.