Diwali is the festival of lights. Diwali is derived from the Sanskrit word Deepavalli. The word Deepavalli means deepa (light) and avali (row). Diwali is a holy Hindu tradition that symbolizes the victory of light over darkness, good over evil and just over unjust.

Celebrated by the Hindu faith, Diwali marks the beginning of the Indian New Year and is the most important holiday in the Hindu calendar. It is often referred to as ‘The Festival of Lights’. Diwali is celebrated during the seventh month of the Hindu lunar calendar which is either October or November. This varies each year.

Diwali marks Lord Rama’s (Hindu god) victorious return to his kingdom along with Hanuman who helped him in achieving success. According to legend, Lord Rama (Hindu god) took 20 days to return to his kingdom after defeating Ravana (king of demons). This signifies the triumph of good over evil.

As with other Indian festivals, Diwali signifies many different things to people around the world.

- In North India, it is celebrated for Lord Rama’s (Hindu god) homecoming from 14 years of exile from Ayodhya (kingdom) after defeating Ravana (king of demons) and his coronation as king.
- In Gujarat, the festival is celebrated to honour goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. Another reason Diwali is celebrated is to remember the defeat of Narakasura (demon) by Lord Krishna.
- In Bengal, it is related with Goddess Kali who destroyed Mahishasura (demon).

The purpose of the Diwali celebration is to ward off evil/darkness and welcome light/prosperity into life. The days of celebration varies from 3 to 5 days. In some countries, such as Singapore and Malaysia, it is celebrated for only a day. Each day of celebration has its significance. Wherever it is celebrated, Diwali signifies the renewal of life.

One of the main highlights of the Diwali celebration is the lighting of oil lamps (diya) in one’s home. Symbolising light overcoming darkness, this is an important and powerful element of the festival. In a deeper context, one is reminded to receive positive spiritual energy (light) into one’s life which includes prosperity, knowledge and peace, as well as, to bring light into other people lives.

Diwali celebrations include special prayers at home, visits to the temple, exchange of cards and gifts, offering of traditional Indian sweets, feasting, meeting old and new friends, new clothes and a time for rejoicing, fun and fireworks.

Houses are generally spring cleaned to welcome Goddess Lakshmi who symbolises prosperity/wealth. Hindus strongly believe that the Goddess of Prosperity will actually “visit” homes and temples on this auspicious day. On the day of Diwali, everyone in the family wakes up early and takes oil baths. The oil which is applied to the body possesses a cooling effect and is said to cleanse one physically and mentally. New clothes are worn to signify the start of a new life, a fresh beginning and a brand new year.
Diwali (cont)

Prayers are held at homes and elders’ blessings and forgiveness are sought. A temple visit is then carried out where one seeks forgiveness and blessings from God.

During this day most Hindus observe a strict vegetarian diet. Hinduism forbids the killing of animals and consumption of meat. However there are also Hindus who observe a non-vegetarian diet. The days of celebrations are completed by inviting relatives and friends for a typical Indian feast. The real celebrations start as night falls and with the lighting of firecrackers and fireworks.

Being away from their homeland, many Hindus believe it is important to maintain traditions and keep their culture alive. The Diwali festival gives Hindus an opportunity to meet friends, relatives, family and everyone who wants to join in the celebrations.

Diwali, being an auspicious occasion, provides many with a reason to reflect on one’s life and the purpose of existence. For Hindus it is the start of a brand new year and one of the best times to continue to develop good values, seek to be a good human being and to help others when it is within one’s capacity. It is an occasion for Hindus to remember their history and to celebrate the deeper meanings of the Diwali festival with their loved ones.

Multifaith Chaplaincy Service

Our vision is to support spirituality, provide care and create community as part of our service to staff and students at Edith Cowan University. We support the opportunity to celebrate, explore and nurture one’s faith.

As a dynamic progressive university, ECU is truly multicultural with students coming from over 75 countries and representing all the major religious traditions. The Multifaith Chaplaincy service supports and values spirituality, faith and religion as an integral part of life. Our chaplains are skilled professionals recognized within their own religious traditions.

In 2004, during Harmony Week, the Multifaith Chaplaincy Service launched the Faith Calendar. The Faith Calendar recognizes the convictions central to many staff and students and symbolizes our respect and care for one another.

As an extension to the Faith Calendar, our service has produced a collection of brochures on Religious Festivals observed within the various religious traditions.

At ECU, we have Hindu staff and students. Celebrating Diwali is a significant time for them as they reaffirm their faith, maintain connections with their traditions and culture, and seek to explore the deeper meanings of life in the context of their community.

The Faith Calendar lists all major religious festivals. The website address is:

Multifaith Chaplaincy Service
All campuses
Churchlands: Room 7.217
Joondalup: Room 4.202
Mount Lawley: Room 8.115

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Religious Groups on Campus
There are a number of religious groups on campus offering a spiritual focus for student life.
Details can be found at: