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"Dhanteras : The worship of Wealth"

Dhanteras is one of the famous festivals of India. It is a first day of five day celebration of Diwali festival. This auspicious day is also observed as Dhantrayodashi. In south India it is known as Dhanalakshmi pooja. The word "Dhana" signifies money or wealth and "Teras" means 13th day as per the Hindu calendar. The festival of "Dhanteras" falls in the Hindu calendar month of "Kartik" (Oct-Nov) on the 13th lunar day of dark fortnight. This auspicious day is celebrated two days before of the festival of lights "Diwali".

On Dhanteras, Goddess Lakshmi - the Goddess of wealth, is worshiped to provide prosperity and well being. Lord Kubera, the God of assets and wealth is also worshipped on this day. Besides in some regions of India, Dhanteras is celebrated as 'Dhanwantari Jayanti' that is the birth anniversary of 'Dhanwantari', who is the God of Ayurveda.

Dhanteras is associated with wealth and prosperity. On this auspicious day people buy gold and silver ornaments to enhance the household prosperity. People indulge in buying other forms of wealth also like

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property, new vehicles, etc. Even buying a few utensils is considered symbolic and auspicious. It holds special significance for the business community. The day of Dhanteras is also favourable for starting a new business venture.

An ancient legend ascribes the occasion to story about the son of King Hima. His horoscope predicted his death by snake-bite on the fourth day of his marriage. On that particular day, his newly-wed wife laid out all her ornaments and lots of gold and silver coins in a heap at the entrance of the sleeping chamber and lit lamps all over the place. When Yama, the god of Death, arrived at the prince's doorstep in the guise of a Serpent, his eyes were dazzled and blinded by the brilliance of the lamps and the Jewellery. Yama could not enter the Prince's chamber, so he climbed on top of the heap of gold coins and sat there the entire night. In the morning, he silently went away. Thus, the young prince was saved from the clutches of death and the day came to be celebrated as Dhanteras.

On Dhanteras there is also a tradition of lighting Yamadeep. In this ritual a diya (earthen lamp) is lighted for Yama, the Lord of Death, outside the house. It is believed that lighting this diya will ward off all evils and also prevent untimely death of any member of the family.

Puja is performed in the evening. Lamps are lit and placed at the entrance to welcome goddess Lakshmi for providing prosperity and well beings and to drive away the shadow of evil spirits. In the many parts of south India, there is a tradition of cows and cattle are worshiped by the farmers. It is believed that it brings immense wealth and prosperity in people's life.

***"All change is hard at first,
 messy in the middle and
 gorgeous at the end"***

- Robin Sharma, writer and
 leadership speaker

INDOLINK Consulting
indolink@indolinkconsulting.com
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