ROYAL HARBINGER

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DIWALI IN UDAIPUR

hat the five-day fiesta Deepawali is round the corner is evident when the Kumbhars in Kumbharwada, near Mukherjee Chowk, begin to make earthen 'diyas' and the markets are abuzz with shoppers. The day that ushers in the festivities is Dhanteras that falls two days before Diwali and is a celebration of prosperity and good fortune.

Dhanteras is considered a highly auspicious day for 'Muharat' of new houses and shops. 'Akhandjyot' for three days is lit. In the evening goddess Laxmi, old coins and ornaments are worshipped. Getting money is considered to be good but not so incurring expenses. First of all Laxmi Pujan used to be performed in the stores of the royal palace. The Maharana would go to Mahalaxmi Mandir in Bhatiyani Choutta for Darshan.

Various temples spread all over the city, celebrate Diwali in their own way. Mahalaxmi

Veteran journalist Ashok Mathur's blog (ashokmathuronudaipur.com) with over forty articles on udaipur's palaces, temples, lakes, gardens, festivals, fairs, wildlife etc. is getting very popular. It has interesting content for udaipurites as well as tourists.

Mandir situated at Bhatiyani Chouta between Jagdish Chowk and Gulab Bagh and built by Maharana Shambhusingh about 400 years ago when he returned from a battle, is thronged by lakhs of devotees during Diwali festival. Built with white stone and exquisitive glass work, the temple was given the present form by Maharana Jagatsingh and was then handed over to the local Shrimali Samaj as Mahalaxmi is the Kuldevi of this community. There are special celebrations from Dhanteras to Annakoot. Dhanteras begins with early morning 'abhishek' and the 'poshaks' offered by the devotees are changed four times. Devotees keep coming till midnight. Similarly, on Roop Choudas there is early morning 'Pujan' and 'aarti' and dresses are changed four times during the day. The 'darshan'in Sinha Lagna on Diwali midnight is considered to be

most auspicious and brings

prosperity in the family. On Annakoot, 'prasad' is prepared in huge quantity and offered to Mahalaxmi while the doors are closed. For the next three days, it is distributed among devotees.

On Diwali Udaipurites are merry. All the 'bazars' in the town get a facelift. The multiresplendent festoons, and myriad tiny bulbs of innumerable hues give the market a sort of other worldly look. The houses are spruced and whitewashed. Ladies beautify their homes with rangoli mandanas, the folk craft of making various designs at the threshold of the house on the doors and walls using red sand and white lime paste. Every festival has designs unique to it. The design of Laxmiji ka Mandana includes images of oil lamps brushing of teeth, daily bath at the top followed by the and exercise, proper clothes, designs of coins and propitious remembring one's Ista, feet of Laxmiji. To save time and labour stencils are also used nowadays.Laxmi and mental health are sharing Ganesh puja is performed in social responsibility whole the evening when tiny clay Diyas are lit to drive away the shadows of evil spirits. Bhajans greedy, be respectful towards in her praise are sung and traditional sweets are offered. In some houses Lord Dhanwantari is also wor- and items such as gold, silver, shipped reverently. On a board diamonds, electronic goods made of mango wood a Swastik is made with turmeric and a Supari that is con-

sidered to be a form of the Lord is also placed. Then the whole family worships it. Lighting a 'diya' made of wet flour and naturally in a mood to make putting it on some grain at the entrance of the house, is believed to please Lord Yama, coloured rustling buntings, and thus give long life and prevent untimely death. To appease Kuber, the god of wealth, a 'deepak' is lit in the

main 'puja' of the house. It is believed that on this day as a result of 'Samundra manthan', Dhanwantari, the god of health, emerged from the ocean with a pot of elixir. So the festival has been named also as Dhanwantri Jayanti. To keep good health, he suggested several measures such as waking up before sunrise, favourite god, and adequate sleep. Among measures for heartedly, be non-violent, truthful and generous, not being elders and indifference to sensual pleasures. To capitalize on the tradition of buying utensils etc. on this auspicious day, the markets come out with lucrative schemes. Dealers of electronic items offer prizes through lottery. Combo offers provide rebate on buying two or more things. Rate concessions and reduced making charges are provided by jewellers. As peo-

ple like to purchase new vehicles, automobile companies offer free gold coins, free registrastion or insurance and warranty for longer periods. Clothes can also be bought at lower prices. No Diwali is complete without fireworks. So they are in great demand. The trend of buying ecofriendly crackers made from recycled paper that have low decibel and emit less smoke is catching up. In additton to traditional sweets

made with 'mawa'. those using dry fruits are also

becoming popular. The day after Dhanteras is called Narakchaturdasi as it is said that Lord Krishna had slayed the demon Narkasur on this fateful day. It is also called Roop Chaturdashi as it is believed that anyone who wakes up in the wee hours, bathes and offers prayers to the goddess Tulsi by lighting a Diya before her, gets enticing beauty, both physical and spiritual. Square shaped oil Diyas are lit in front of the houses as it is believed that 'Pitras' visit homes on this day. Doing so also pleases Yamraj. In mes Sundarkand and Hanuman Chalisa are recited as it is believed that Anjali gave birth to Hanuman on this day. The day is also called Choti Diwali as it precedes the big Diwali day.On Kartik Amawasya, there used to be a feast by the Maharana in the morning. A 'Durbar' was held in Naginavadi in the afternoon. The Maharana used to wear special dress and ornaments. He worshipped goddess Laxmi. There was parade by horses and a programme of music played on musical instruments. The Hatsaal of Rajmahal was lit up with 'Diyas'. Courtiers present in Darikhana were given sugarcane. After bidding forewell to courtiers, the Maharana would perform the ritual of Heed-sichwana with his relations in the Janana Mahal. Sugarcane was

sent to be houses of Sardars

cotton to some employees for illumination at home. Picchola lake was also lit up by floating Diyas. Diwali is a busy day for Udaipurites. They get up early and have a bath. Women get busy giving final touches to decoration and making colorful 'rangolis'. 'Bandanwars' are hung on the front door. Special dishes are a part of the sumptuous lunch. Preparations are made for the big evening 'Pujan' in which lotus flowers, especially red ones, are used. Families get together to perform Laxmi 'Pujan' with deep reverence in the evening or Diwali in making 'diyas' and night during an auspicious at different places. Then it is of starving. Out of dozens of time to fire crackers and greet and meet relations and friends. A visit to watch the decorated markets is also common. On this day, it is a tradition to start business with new account books.A new change that is related to accounting by shopkeepers is the use of computers with the result that the paper made Khatabahi has become obsolete. According to the Khatabahi makers in Bada Bazar, the quantity of their product has gone down considerably. After the initial investment in the purchase of a computer, its use saves a lot of time, money and energy. Earlier one Muneem, accountant, was needed by one firm but now a single computer

In the temples the old traditions are still followed religiously but this ancient festival that started in the time of Lord Ram has seen several changes in the way it has been celebrated. In the fast changing scenario of Diwali in Lake City, the scintillating glow of the earthen 'diyas' is being replaced by small electric bulbs of different colours. Due to the diminishing demand of 'diyas', the potters of Kumharwada area of Udaipur who used to get busy weeks in advance of earthen pitchers are having a families of Kumhars there is only a few engaged in this profession now. The new generation is moving on to other means to earn a living. The cost of the raw materials is rising fast. The sand used in making 'diyas' is of a special type and is procured from distant places such as Nathdwara and Vallabhnagar. One tractor costs about Rs. 4000. The price of wood used for baking the pots has also gone up considerably. And as a result of all this, the old tradition of using 'diyas' on Diwali is dying

During the reign of the Maharanas, on the day following Diwali was celebrated Khenkhara. A huge figure of Jalandhar Daitya made with bamboo wood would be set up

It was stuffed with firecrackers, covered with paper and then painted. In the evening the Maharana would go to Chougan to watch the elephant fight. Then the figure

of the Daitya was burnt.

Outside the Toranpol of

Rajmahal, on the floor were

made Goverdhan with cow-

dung that was crushed by the

cows of the Janani Diyodi.



and Umraos who were not pre- to the next shop. This work is

sent in the court. They were being done mostly on the basis

also sent to the Resident in of annual contract. Now in

ital. As per tradition the chased only for purpose of per-

Maharana sent 'Diyas', oil and forming a ritual on the occa-

On Annakoot, Goverdhan puja is performed to commemorate Lord Krishna's lifting of Goverdhan Parvat on his finger and worshipping it. Outside the main gate of the house, a figure of Goverdhan is made with cowdung and worshipped with water, 'roli', 'moli', grains, curds etc. Cows are worshipped reverently. Awhole lot of dishes are prepared and offered as Bhog.In temples Lord and then distributed as Prasad. Later in the day, people meet their relatives and friends and wish them Happy Diwali and a prosperous year ahead.On the last day of the five-day fiesta is celebrated Bhai Dooj, an occasion to strengthen the brother-sister bond. Sisters invite their brothers to their homes, put 'Tilak' on the forehead, and offer severel tasty dishes and get gifts from brothers. It is believed that Yama, the god of death, visited his sister river Yamuna and blessed her by granting a boon that whoever visits his

sister on this day would be

freed from the fear of Yama.

In Kayasth homes, Chitragupta

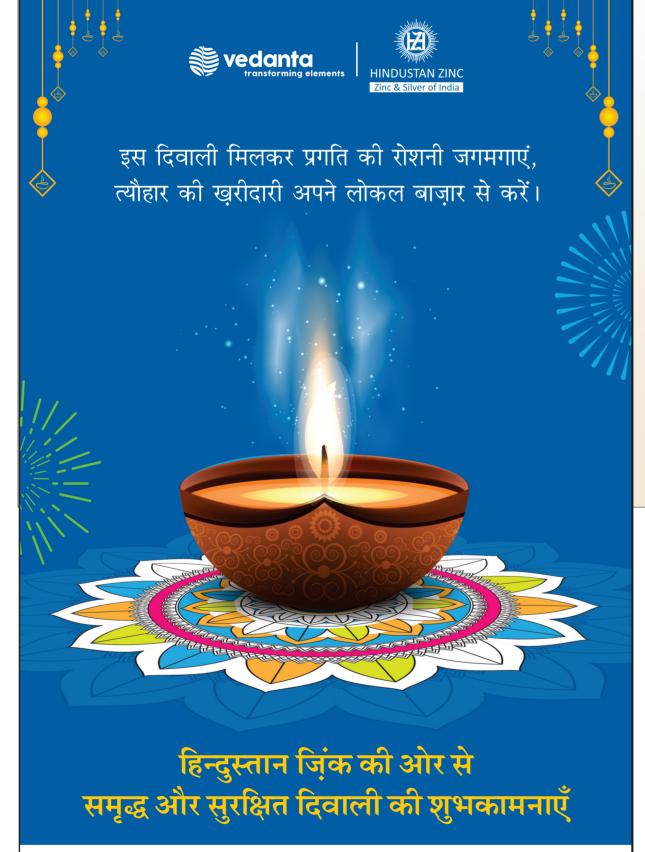
from whom this community

traces its origin is worshipped

with great devotion. They also

worship Kalam and Dawat on

- Ashok Mathur



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Petrol price cut by Rs 6.07, diesel by Rs 11.75 per litre

trained person can complete

the work in a couple of hours

every day and then move on

New Delhi: Petrol price on Thursday was cut by Rs 6.07 per litre and diesel price by Rs 11.75 in Delhi as oil companies passed on a record reduction in excise duty rates to consumers

Buckling under pressure, the government had on Wednesday cut excise duty on petrol by Rs 5 per litre and that on diesel by Rs 10 a litre to give reprieve to consumers battered by record high retail fuel prices. Since states charge local sales tax or VAT not just on the base price but also on the excise duty levied by the centre, the total incidence of price reduction is higher.

Petrol will cost Rs 103.97 per litre in Delhi against Rs 110.04 per litre, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel

Diesel rates accordingly will reduce to Rs 86.67 per litre from Rs 98.42 per litre.In Mumbai, petrol price has been cut by Rs 5.87 to Rs 109.98 per litre and diesel by Rs 12.48 to Rs 94.14 per litre. Kolkata saw the price of diesel being reduced



by Rs 5.82 to Rs 104.67 per litre and that of diesel by Rs 11.77 to Rs 89.79 per litre. Petrol price in Chennai has been reduced by Rs 5.26 to Rs 101.40 per litre and diesel by Rs 11.16 to Rs 91.43 per litre.VAT rates differ from state to state, leading to differential rates of fuel. The excise duty cut announced on Wednesday night is the highest-ever reduction in excise duty. It rolls back a part of the Rs 13 and Rs 16 per litre increase in taxes on petrol and diesel effected between March 2020 and May 2020 to avoid passing on to consumers the sharp fall in international oil prices. The hike in excise duty had taken central taxes on petrol to their highest level of Rs 32.90 per litre and that on diesel to Rs 31.80 a litre. Reducing the excise duty, the Union government also urged states to commensurately reduce VAT on petrol and diesel to give relief to consumers. Six BJP-ruled states of Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Tripura and Bihar reduced VAT.