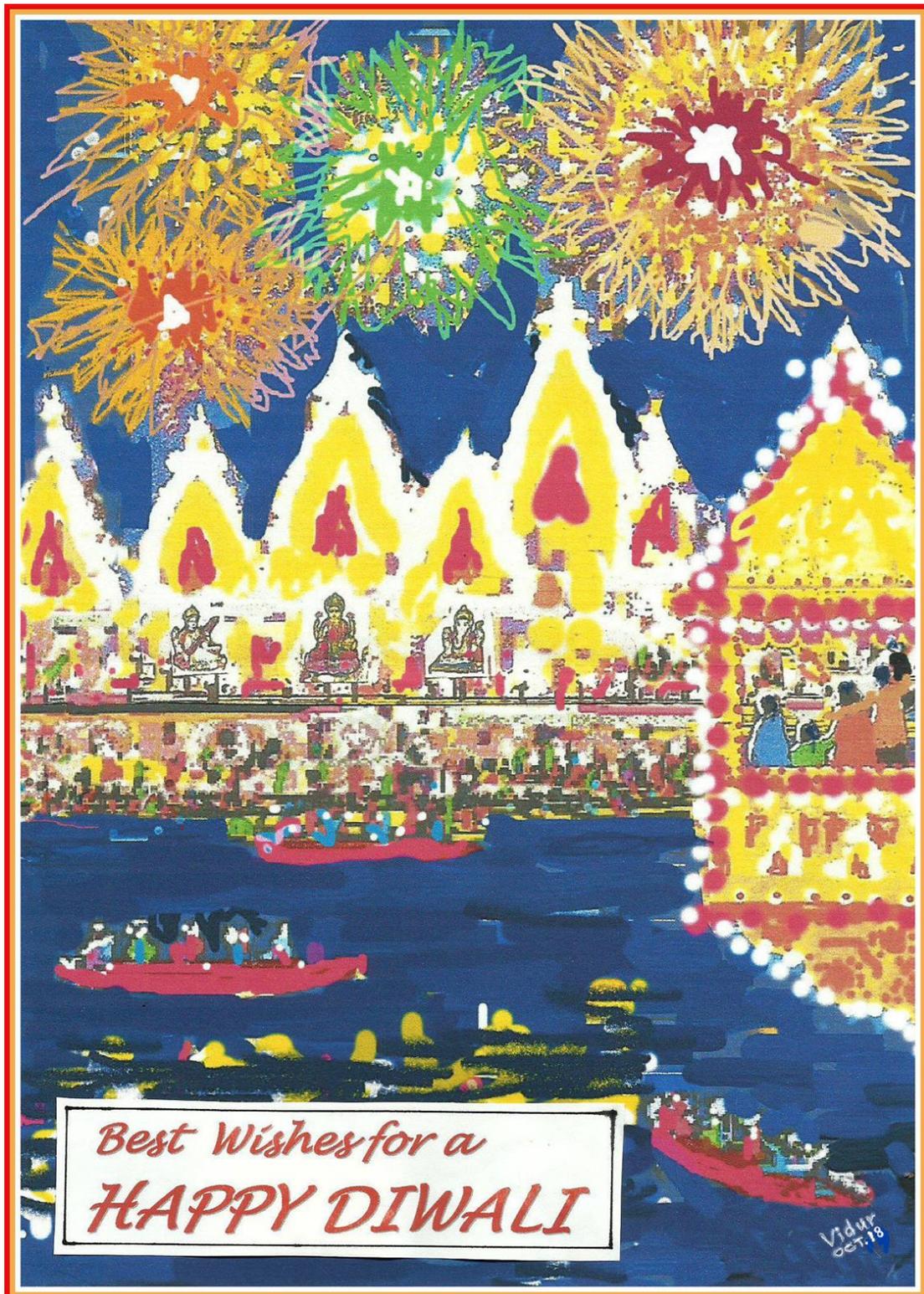


Very Best Wishes for a Happy Diwali *By Vidur Dindayal*

Aayi Diwali aayi Diwali. This song from the 1944 film *Rattan* is the best song I know about Diwali. In the film, the star is sad. She is singing that Diwali has arrived and people are celebrating, but she cannot because she is lonely and without the one she loves. The words are touching, but the music and picture capture for me all the nice things about Diwali, the atmosphere of love and warmth and the diyas with glowing dancing lights.

Diwali or Dipaawali (Cluster of Lights) is the climax of the autumn Hindu festival season of worship and celebration of our heavenly Mother. It starts with Navratri (nine nights) worship of Durga Maa in her nine forms and ends with Dusshera festival on the tenth day and night. 20 days after Dusshera, we celebrate Diwali. Diwali is celebrated on the last day of the dark half of the lunar month of Kartik in the Hindu calendar.



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We worship the Divine Mother at Diwali and give thanks for her blessings over us. The holy Vedas states: 'God is not only Father but Mother also.' In our celebrations worship of the creator in the form of the Divine Mother is most significant. Worshipping the Divine as the Eternal Mother has been an integral part of Hindu tradition for millennia and it is a unique contribution of Hinduism to global religious culture.

The Tridevi Goddesses Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati are feminine aspects of the masculine Trimurti Gods Brahma, Vishnu and Mahase (Shiva). The roles of the Tridevi mirror those of their male counterparts: Creator (Maha Sarasvati), Preserver (Maha Laxmi), and Destroyer (Maha Kali –Parvati as Durga with her demon destroyer powers). At Diwali we worship the Tridevi Saraswati, Lakshmi, Parvati.

Saraswati Mata, the creator, is the goddess of light who dispels our ignorance and inner darkness through her grace. The goddess of learning, the arts, and culture, she grants wisdom, knowledge, for the betterment of our minds and refinement of our character. She is generally shown as a graceful goddess in spotless white clothes, seated on a lotus seat, with four hands, one holding a Veena, a musical instrument, the remaining three holding a book, a rosary and lotus respectively.

Lakshmi Mata, the preserver, is the goddess of wealth, fertility, material fulfilment, magnificence, joy and exaltation. She is worshipped as a goddess who grants both worldly prosperity as well as liberation from the cycle of life and death. She is a protector as well as bestower. She also protects from ill health and adversity. In Hinduism, worship of Lakshmi is considered a suitable remedy for the alleviation of suffering. Wealth plays an important role in life on earth. Hence, as the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi fulfils her duties as the nourisher, preserver and provider.

Parvati - Durga Maa, the demon-fighting Kali, is the goddess of power, beauty, love, and spiritual fulfilment, embodiment of female dynamism.

The Tridevi of Saraswati, Lakshmi and Durga are worshipped in our womenfolk, our mother, aunts, sisters and daughters. They embody all the attributes of Tridevi, of beauty and kindness. They lend brightness to our homes and our life. They are the rich spring and nourishment which make us prosper in our life.

In my case, Laskhmi Mata has always been my mother, my mussi, my phuwas, chachis, didis, women cousins, daughters and nieces. They each one of them radiate those qualities of Tri Devi, not least beauty, abundant love, generosity, inspiration and encouragement, the driving force of any success and prosperity I have achieved in my life. I feel this is so of everyone of us.

Diwali marks the beginning of a new year. Business people open new accounts, placing a coin in their new account books. Diwali is a time for thanksgiving prayers, for the family get together, for love, goodwill and generosity, for greetings, gifts and sweets. We thank God, and pray for prosperity in the New Year. Diyas, little clay lamps decorate our homes, everywhere.

Diwali also celebrates many great events for Hindus: the marriage of Divine Mother Lakshmi to Lord Vishnu; the death of wicked king Naraksura at the hands of Lord Krishna; Lord Vishnu's humbling of arrogant Balli; the day Great King Vikram Aditya ascended his throne; the visit of generous King Mahaballi; the return of Princess Deepa, and prosperity to her kingdom. Goddess Kali is worshipped at Diwali, to banish all evil from the world. On Diwali night, Pitrus, departed souls, flickering as lights, ascend to the heavens.

It is the day when jealous and selfish Queen Kaikeyi accepted defeat and repented for her wrongs. She had thrown the kingdom of Ayodhya into darkness, when she secured the banishment of Lord Rama the heir to the throne, so that her son Bharat would be crowned king. Diwali celebrates the end of Lord Rama's 14 years in exile, his victory over demon king Rawan and his triumphant return to assume his rightful place as king. Millions of lights showed the way to Holy City Ayodhya, itself aglow with lights on Diwali night.

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We pray to Lord Ganesh, the all powerful elephant headed god of wisdom and good fortune, the remover of obstacles, for his blessings for success to attend all our undertakings.

Goddess Lakshmi visits every home on Diwali night, and lives in that home which is beautiful and clean, where peace, harmony, knowledge and goodness dwell, and where beautiful lights brighten the home to welcome everyone.

Goddess Lakshmi born out of the ocean of milk, comes out of a lotus flower, holds lotus flowers in her hands, the lotus flowers representing purity. Her other hands are giving. As Goddess of wealth Mother Lakshmi shares her wealth with everyone who worships her. At Diwali time every door is decorated with rangoli patterns, made with coloured rice or powders, welcoming visitors, especially Mother Lakshmi, who will bless us with wealth, happiness and prosperity.

Diwali celebrates the triumph of good over evil. We all know that in life, good does triumph over evil, however long it may take. For many of us who suffer under injustice and evil, Diwali reminds us that the suffering ends one day. It gives us hope when nothing else is there to hang on to.

Diwali celebrates light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. Light is a blessing. In daylight, life thrives. In darkness, we welcome light. Diwali celebrating knowledge over ignorance, reminds us of the value of knowledge. Knowledge over millennia has made daily chores of living easier. Knowledge of ourselves shows us the way to a better quality of life, free from conflict, a life of harmony and more caring towards one another.

Diwali lights are our prayer, as in the Sanskrit verse: 'Tamaso Maa Jyotir Gamaya.' -'Lead us O Divine Mother from darkness into light, from ignorance into knowledge.'

With Love and Best Wishes,

Vidur Dindayal!

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London, UK.

Vidur Dindayal was born in Guyana and currently resides in the UK. He published *Guyanese Achievers USA & Canada: A Celebration*. A collaboration between Vidur Dindayal and the Guyanese diaspora *Guyanese Achievers, USA and Canada* celebrates the academics, actors, doctors, educators, entrepreneurs, and others who, by demonstrating inventiveness and persistence, have been recognized as exemplars of Guyanese achievement in North America.

