

# BINNY'S DIWALI

## THE DIWALI STORY

**D**iwali, the “Festival of Lights,” marks the victory of good over evil, light over darkness. Even though it is a Hindu festival, it is celebrated by people of different faiths all across India. A national holiday in India, Diwali is also known as Deepavali, from the clay lamps (known as *diyas* or *deepas*) that people light to celebrate it.

There are many legends about why we celebrate Diwali. This is one of them:

Once upon a time, long, long ago, there lived a demon-king called Ravana. He had ten heads and twenty arms and ruled over his kingdom with cruelty and spite.

Meanwhile, the good and handsome Prince Rama had been banished from his kingdom by his wicked stepmother, who wanted her son, Bharata, to become king. Instead of arguing with her, Rama immediately gave up his crown and prepared to live a humble life in the forest. When Bharata found out what his mother had done, he begged Rama to take his rightful place on the throne. But Rama was a man of his word and he refused Bharata's pleas. Rama was accompanied by his loyal wife, Sita, and brother, Lakshmana, who also left their riches and jewels and palaces to live a simple life in the forest.

Despite having no money, Rama and Sita were in love and happy in their new, humble life. One day, Rama and Lakshmana were approached by the Wise Men and Women of the World. Ravana's demons were making their lives miserable, they complained. “We beg you to

help us, O Fearless and Good Princes,” they asked.

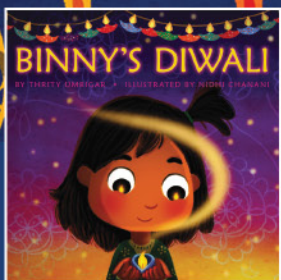
So the two good brothers went to war against Ravana's henchmen. They fought bravely and were victorious in every battle.

When word got back to Ravana he was angry as could be. In order to take revenge, he flew to the forest, kidnapped the good Princess Sita, and brought her back to his island of Lanka. After searching all over for his wife, Rama finally learned the truth about her kidnapping from Hanuman, the monkey-general. Hanuman and the other monkeys took Rama to Ravana's island to help him find his wife and bring her back home.

The battle went on for many days. On one side were the good guys: Rama, Lakshmana, Hanuman, and his band of monkeys. On the other were the bad guys: Ravana and his devious demons. At last, Rama and Ravana met in an epic battle. At first, they were evenly matched but then, finally, Rama defeated Ravana and good triumphed over evil.

People cheered all over the land and the reunion between Rama and Sita was joyful. They decided to make their way back home to Ayodhya to take their rightful place as king and queen. But they had lived away for fourteen years and so, in celebration and in gratitude, the villagers who they had helped lit lamps all along the way to help them find their way home.

Even after thousands of years, people still celebrate Diwali, the Festival of Lights, to remind us to be good and kind and brave and honest.





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## THE FIVE DAYS OF DIWALI



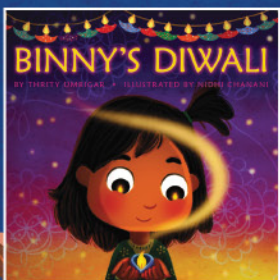
On the first day of Diwali, people often clean their homes and shop for kitchen utensils.

On the second day, homes are decorated with clay lamps and colorful patterns called *rangoli*, which are created on the floor with colored sand or powder.

On the third day, families gather to pray to the goddess Lakshmi, to enjoy a delicious feast, and to watch fireworks.

On the fourth day, friends and relatives give one another gifts and good wishes for the season.

On the fifth and last day, siblings visit one another and exchange gifts. Others use the day to clean and organize their work spaces.



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