

HOW TO CELEBRATE

UTS MULTICULTURAL WOMEN'S NETWORK

2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The UTS Multicultural Women's Network acknowledge the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the Boorooberongal people of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal people and the Gamaygal people upon whose ancestral lands the UTS campus stand. We pay respect to Elders past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands and recognising their continuing connection to land, waters, country, and community. We acknowledge the historical oppression of land, language, and culture of First Nations People and commit to the decolonising journey we all share.

WHAT

The Multicultural Women's Network aims to showcase significant cultural events through our e-booklets.

WHY

To acknowledge the cultural diversity of UTS. Using an assets-based approach of amplifying how people celebrate, this project aims to empower people to feel proud of their cultural backgrounds, as well as to celebrate the cultural diversity of our UTS community.

WHO

This is for UTS staff, students and anyone else you think would benefit from learning more about cultural events.



THIS MONTH WE'RE CELEBRATING



DIWALI

WHAT IS DIWALI ?

Diwali (*deepavali*) is a predominantly Hindu festival celebrated by many people over the world. It has both a religious and cultural angle. The festival symbolises the

→ **spiritual victory of light over darkness**

→ **good over evil**

→ **knowledge over ignorance**

→ In Northern India, people celebrate the story of King Rama's return to Ayodhya after he defeated Ravana by lighting rows of clay lamps.

→ Southern India celebrates the day the Lord Krishna defeated the demon Narakasura.

→ Western India marks the day that Lord Vishnu sent the demon King Bali to rule the nether world.

The festival gets its name from the row (*avali*) of clay lamps (*deepa*) that celebrants light outside their homes to symbolise the inner light that protects from spiritual darkness.

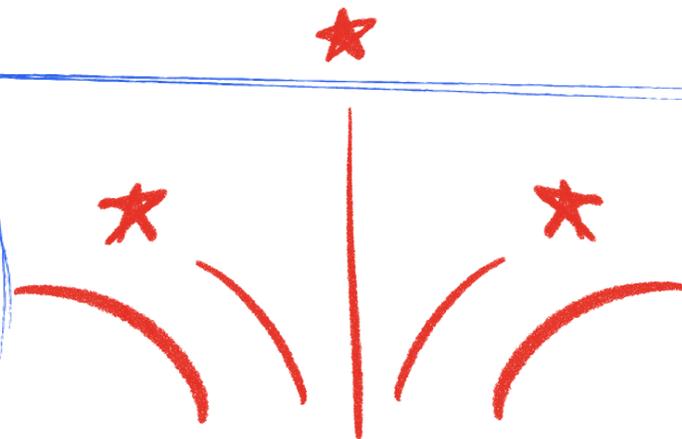
Click [here](#) and [here](#) to learn more about Diwali celebrations in Australia!

DIWALI CELEBRATIONS OVER FIVE DAYS

DAY 1: People clean their homes and shop for gold and/or kitchen utensils to help bring good fortune.

DAY 2: Homes are decorated with clay lamps and design patterns called *rangoli* on the floor with coloured powders or sand.

DAY 3: On the main day of the festival, families gather together for *Lakshmi puja*, a prayer to Goddess Lakshmi, followed by feasts and fireworks.



DIWALI CELEBRATIONS OVER *FIVE* DAYS

DAY 4: On this first day of the new year, friends and family visit with gifts and best wishes.

DAY 5: Brothers visit their married sisters and share a feast together - usually prepared by the sister.



Nema Madnani and family



STORIES FROM THE UTS COMMUNITY



DIWALI IS THE TIME

“

to decorate the house with Maa, fight with her on who is more creative... ”

“

to lie down on my grandma's lap while she tells me old tales and feeds me the best snacks in the world... ”

”

Nema Madnani

Student Equity Project Support Officer,
Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion

“

to force my brother and my father to wear traditional clothes and not leave the room until they agree....

It's the best time of the year! I plan for my Diwali outfits, decorations, food months in advance cause everything needs to be perfect on Diwali. ”



THIS YEAR...

“

Since I have come to Australia I have not been able to go home for Diwali and each year I try to make my little Diwali nook here but it is never the same without my family. I dress up, I decorate. But without their chirpy voices around and the warmth from their love, it isn't the same. Each year we do a video call and my mum and I try very hard to hide our tears...

I look forward to celebrating it with my husband this year...the first Diwali for the newly married is apparently as auspicious as god himself!

”

Nema Madnani

IN MY HEART ...

“

DIWALI is a time filled with joy and sweet memories. I fondly recall starting the day by creating intricate Rangoli patterns, a tradition that added a creative and colourful touch to our home. The day unfolded with visits from family and friends and the highlight was undoubtedly the delightful array of Indian sweets that we indulged in.

”

“

As the sun set, I would help my mother to prepare the tray of earthen diyas and then place them in different parts of our home and balcony.

”

Avni Kumar

Senior Research Consultant, Institute for Sustainable Futures

“

One of my fondest Diwali memories is of strolling through the neighbourhood's lanes with friends, marvelling at the creative light decorations adorning each house. We would playfully rank the best displays, appreciating the unique efforts put forth by our neighbours.

”

THIS YEAR...

“

The vibrant spirit of Diwali,
filled with lights, laughter, and community,
is a cherished memory that I hold dear...
I greatly miss the lively atmosphere that
this festival brings.

”

Avni Kumar

MOST IMPORTANT THINGS:



Diyas at Diwali



Rangoli



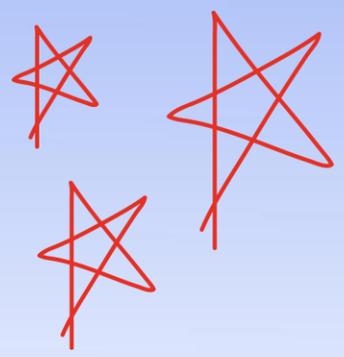
FINAL THOUGHTS

I've always had a love-hate relationship with Deepavali. Growing up in South India, where the day is a family festival rather than a religious one, I looked forward to the sweets, snacks, and the new clothes we were given on that day. It was the day people got their annual bonus, and the day my parents distributed annual gifts to everyone, including the postman, the milkman, and other delivery people.

However, we always also had dogs at home and they hated the noise of the fireworks in the streets, so we always spent the night of Deepavali locking ourselves up inside the house with the dogs. Now, three decades after leaving India, I have slowly come to love Deepavali without the noisy fireworks, *simply as a day to celebrate with family and friends, and even my dog.*

Associate Professor Bhuva Narayan
FASS Academic HDR Coordinator

IN WHATEVER WAYS
YOU CELEBRATE



HAPPY DIWALI!

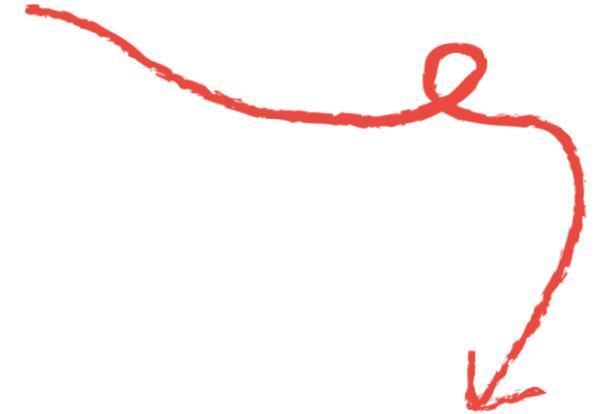
JOIN US



In supporting women at UTS
to reach their full potential.



For more
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This booklet was created by

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and designed by

→ The Fifth Studio

THANKYOU FOR
SHARING YOUR
STORY