

# Importance of Diwali

By Ryuko Hira

Hon. President, Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry and K.S.H. Indian Merchants Association of Yokohama

The significance of Diwali originates from the capital of the kingdom ruled by Narakasura, known as Prag-jyotisha-puram. The name consists of four parts. Prag means before, jyoti means light, sha refers to forgetting, puram means the city. The inner meaning of this name is that the inhabitants of this city have forgotten the ancient Atma-Jyoti (eternal light). Narakasura, the King of Prag-jyotisha-puram, had totally forgotten the Atmic principle, identifying himself with the bodily, material, and technical possessions, leading a life full of darkness and ignorance.

One has to develop attachment to the self and not to the body. Attachment to the body or material or technical possessions is a main cause for all sufferings. One who travels toward ignorance is Naraka (inhuman) and one who travels toward wisdom is Nara (human). To travel along the path of wisdom, one needs to develop sacred thoughts, sacred words and sacred ac-



Ryuko Hira

tions. Anger is the main cause for man to lose his physical and mental powers. If one gets angry, one loses the energy obtained from food taken over a period of three months. King Narakasura lost all his strength due to his anger.

When Narakasura was killed, all those who suffered under him were overjoyed. Having led a life of darkness until then, both internally and externally, they celebrated the occasion as Diwali by lighting lamps.

There is significance in lighting lamps. The flame of one lamp can light a whole array of lamps. That one lamp symbolizes the Param Jyothi (supreme effulgence). The others symbolize the Jivan Jyothis (light or the soul in individual selves). Diwali is celebrated in order to teach this truth to the world. People celebrate Diwali by setting off firecrackers signifying the victory of good over evil.

The inner meaning underlying Diwali should be rightly understood. People have a sacred bath early in the morning and wear new clothes, and keep their houses and surroundings clean. Diwali teaches us the importance of internal and external cleanliness. But it is Love that keeps your heart clean. We should celebrate Diwali in full realization of its inner significance.

May the readers be illumined with the lamp of higher wisdom. All are welcome to share and experience the joy of happy, happy, happy Diwali.