

THE SPIRITUAL SCIENTIST

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Illuminate Your Heart This Diwali

Diwali is one of the most popular festivals in the Indian calendar. The anniversaries of many auspicious historical events comprise this ancient festival. The festivities comprise of firecrackers, ceremonial bathing, feasting, artis, family get-togethers - and illuminations.

The aesthetically appealing illumination dates back to many millennia when the jubilant citizens of Ayodhya welcomed Lord Rama back to their city after His exile. The Ramayana describes, how when Lord Rama was exiled due to the misdirected intrigues of Kaikayi, Ayodhya became almost like a ghost city. All its citizens were plunged into an ocean of separation and sorrow for fourteen agonizingly long years. When Lord Rama finally returned, their heart's innermost longing was at last fulfilled. They spontaneously celebrated this joyful reunion of divine love by illuminating their houses.

Apart from being a historical reality, this event also has immense relevance to our lives. Ayodhya is like our heart and Lord Rama is the Lord of our heart, the supreme object of love and devotion for all of us. Due to unfortunate misconceptions, we too have exiled the Lord from our heart. Just as Ayodhya became a ghost town when Lord Rama departed, our heart too has become infested with negative - and often self-destructive - feelings like anxiety, boredom, loneliness, depression, stress, prejudice, envy, anger and hatred. And, just like the citizens of Ayodhya, our lives too have become filled with emptiness and lamentation.

There is one important difference between us and the citizens of Ayodhya. They clearly knew that their grief was due to bereavement from the Lord. We however are often slow to recognize this root cause of our malaise. We try to hide and forget the existential emptiness of our life by accelerating its pace in pursuit of mundane goals - wealth, enjoyment, entertainment, fame, power and position. But these illusory substitutes for love of God offer only flickering titillation, not lasting fulfillment. Consequently, despite the frenzied pace and the jazzy gadgets that are the pride of our lives, we still remain largely unfulfilled and disappointed.

Historically, the importance of Diwali is not the lighting of lamps, but the return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya. So our celebration of Diwali will remain incomplete if we continue to restrict ourselves to lighting lamps. Then how can we welcome the Lord back into our hearts and experience the essence of Diwali?

Lord Rama answers in the Ramayana through His instructions, which inform us of our actual identity and purpose. We are all eternal spiritual beings, belonging to the kingdom of God, where we eternally enthroned the Lord as the king of our hearts and rejoice in selfless loving exchanges with Him. When we exile the Lord from our hearts, we exile ourselves from that world of endless love and come to this mortal world, where we misidentify ourselves with temporary material bodies. Covered by spiritual amnesia, we play illusory roles and pursue illusory goals, but get only disappointment and distress. Though we exile and forget the Lord, He never forgets us and never actually leaves our heart. He just becomes un-manifest to our vision and continues to accompany and guide us throughout all our

adventures and misadventures in this world, eagerly waiting and inviting us back to His loving shelter. By cultivating knowledge from the sacred scriptures about the Lord and His love for us and reviving our dormant love for Him by chanting His holy names, we can invite Him back to our hearts. Therefore while lighting the earthen lamps this Diwali, let us also light our heart with divine wisdom and love.

Please continue with us as we explore the higher dimensions of life.

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Dedicated to

His Divine Grace A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada,

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