



Galaxies Evening Service 22 November 2015

Service by Pete Cowley
& Fergus Collinson



Welcome:

Tonight we are looking at several festivals the celebrate "Light of Lights" and what it means to various groups

Gathering together:

Leader: Come into the festivals called light of lights, festivals of light and other celebrations of the light and its special meanings.

Enter this place with an open heart and an open mind

Open our ears and eyes with all who share in this GalaXies community

ALL: Let us worship God, however we concieve.



"Astounding God Concieve!" By Fergus Collinson and the prime theme of his website: fergus-art.com

Introduction: On The Road to Jericho!

It was no five minute miracle.

These things take time, you said, and you sat beside me, at the edge of the road, your hands on my eyes, slowly and gently removing my judgemental attitudes.

I admit I felt vulnerable. There's comfort in shadows. The world of light was so vast that if you hadn't been there, I might have changed my mind, but your touch spoke to my eyes and there was no going back.

As you healed my blindness, you asked me what I could see but I didn't have the words to describe the loveliness emerging from the light or what that loveliness was doing to my heart.

It was beauty, you said. Without the blindness of judgement, the eyes only see beauty, the heart knows only love. The heart that knows only love, you said, is in the presence of God.

I told You I couldn't see all that well as that, and you reminded me again that miracles took time.

Psalms for the road, Joy Cowley

Hanukkah (Jewish) - The festival of the lights!



Several [Hanukiyot](#) on the eighth night of the festival.

Hanukkah, from the Hebrew word for "dedication" or "consecration", marks the re-dedication of the Temple after its desecration by [Antiochus IV](#) and commemorates the "miracle of the container of oil." According to the [Talmud](#), at the re-dedication of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) following the victory of the [Maccabees](#) over the [Seleucid Empire](#), there was only enough consecrated [olive oil](#) to fuel the eternal flame in the Temple for one day. Miraculously, the oil burned for eight days - which was the length of time it took to press, prepare and consecrate new oil.

Diwali (Hindu)

Diwali (or Deepavali, the "festival of lights") is an ancient Hindu festival celebrated in autumn (northern hemisphere) or spring (southern hemisphere) every year. Diwali is one of the largest and brightest festivals in India. The festival spiritually signifies the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, good over evil, and hope over despair. Its celebration includes millions of lights shining on housetops, outside doors and windows, around temples and other buildings in the communities and countries where it is observed. The



The festival preparations and rituals typically extend over a five day period, but the main festival night of Diwali coincides with the darkest, new moon night of the Hindu Lunisolar month Kartika. In the Gregorian calendar, Diwali night falls between mid-October and mid-November.

Before Diwali night, people clean, renovate, and decorate their homes and offices. On Diwali night, Hindus dress up in new clothes or their best outfit, light up diyas (lamps and candles) inside and outside their home, participate in family puja (prayers) typically to Lakshmi - the goddess of wealth and prosperity. After puja, fireworks follow, then a family feast including

mithai (sweets), and an exchange of gifts between family members and close friends. Deepavali also marks a major shopping period in nations where it is celebrated.

Diwali is an important festival for Hindus. The name of festive days as well as the rituals of Diwali vary significantly among Hindus, based on the region of India. In many parts of India, the festivities start with Dhanteras (in Northern and Western part of India), followed by Naraka Chaturdasi on second day, Deepavali on the third day, Diwali Padva dedicated to wife-husband relationship on the fourth day, and festivities end with Bhau-beej dedicated to sister-brother bond on the fifth day. Dhanteras usually falls eighteen days after Dussehra.

On the same night that Hindus celebrate Diwali, Jains celebrate a festival of lights to mark the attainment of moksha by Mahavira, Sikhs celebrate Bandi Chhor Divas and some Buddhists also celebrate Diwali remembering Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism. Diwali is an official holiday in Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Malaysia, Singapore and Fiji.

The Tazaungdaing Festival (Burmese)

(also known as the Festival of Lights and spelt Tazaungdine Festival), is held on the full moon day of Tazaungmon, the eighth month of the Burmese calendar, is celebrated as a national holiday in Burma (Myanmar) and marks the end of the rainy season. It also marks the end of the Kathina (Kahtein in Burmese) season, during which monks are offered new robes and alms.

The festival's origins predate the introduction of Buddhism to Burma, and are believed to stem from the Kattika festival, which honors the guardian planets in Hindu astrology.

Celebrations:

Robe-weaving competitions to weave special yellow monk robes called matho thingan are also held throughout the country, most notably in Yangon's Shwedagon Pagoda. During these competitions, held for two consecutive nights (the night preceding and the night of the full moon), contestants work nonstop from night until dawn to weave these garments. The tradition commemorates a widely known story of the Buddha's life. Seeing that the Buddha would soon renunciate, the Buddha's mother, Maya, who had been reborn in the Tavatimsa heaven, spent the entire night weaving yellow monk robes for him. Her sister Gotami (Buddha's aunt) continued this tradition and offered new robes annually.



In Shan State, particularly in Taunggyi, hot air balloons lit with candles, are released to celebrate the full moon day, similar to Yi Peng celebrations in Northern Thailand. The balloons are released as an offering to the Sulamani cetiya in Tavitima, a heaven in Buddhist cosmology and home of the devas, or as a way to drive away evil spirits, although the origins of the tradition date back to 1894, when the British first held hot air balloon competitions in Taunggyi, soon after the annexation of Upper Burma. In recent years, these traditions have also been transported to other parts of the country, including Naypyidaw, which holds an annual government-sponsored celebration, and Pyin Oo Lwin (Maymyo).

Almsgiving and charity, both religious and secular, including satuditha feasts, are also commonly undertaken during this festival, as a means of merit-making. Others return home to pay homage to elders (gadaw) and visit pagodas. Many concerts and other secular festivities, such as live performances of traditional dramas like the Yama Zatdaw, are also held between Thadingyut (the end of the Buddhist lent) and Tazaungdaing.

In pre-colonial times, the Burmese court worshipped 15 Hindu deities on the full moon day. On the eighth waning day of that month, after a procession to the king, 8 pyatthat structures made of bamboo were burned.

On this night, young men celebrate a custom called "kyimano pwe" lit. "crow doesn't wake"), by practising mischief on their neighbours, by stealing or playing tricks on them.

Centering thought

Dragged down but never out
the mystical light
manages to shine throughout the patches of dark
to never give up
but to reach toward life.
The moment of reconnection
just takes a second.

Rhonda Swenson from the book "Oh Light"

Departure:

As we depart from this place
of light,
love,
and warm hearts
may we be a light to others
may we treat all we meet with loving-kindness
may we warm others hearts with our care and
commitment
to compassion, truth and justice
in all our dealings.
May we BE the light!

