



The Significance Of Deepavali

Long ago our ancients sounded a call asking us to shake ourselves free from the state of sleep where everything is shrouded in darkness. The state of *ajnana* or the darkness of spiritual ignorance is when one loses Self-awareness. So they gave a call: 'Awake! Do not be in this state of sleep. Arise, awake, and attain illumination. Go to those who have become fully awakened. Approach them and ask them to likewise awaken the Light within you. Attain full awareness by humbly approaching worthy teachers. "Uttisthata Jagrata Prapya Varannibodhata" [Katha Up. 1.3.14] "Tadviddhi Pranipaatenā Pariprashnena Sevayā" [Gita 4.34] – This great call is the heart of spiritual India. And the significance of Deepavali is a re-enacting of this banishing darkness from within yourself, of shaking yourself free from the sleep of ignorance and waking up into the light of a new dawn of full awareness and this is the process you have to work out yourself.

And to remind you of this, each year the festival of lights is held during the darkest night. It comes as an annual reminder of what you have to do – banish darkness, bring in light, be full of light and revel in the illumination. Fill yourself with the light. Fill the whole world with light by your own being in it.

And to remind us perpetually, they put this great call into our everyday prayer: "Asato Ma Sadgamaya Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya Mrtyorma Amrtam Gamaya – Lead us from the unreal to the real; lead us from darkness to Light, lead us from mortality to immortality." [Brih Up. 1.3.28] To be in darkness is death. To arise from darkness into Light is to rise up from mortality and death into everlasting life. To awaken the Light within is to break the net of illusion of vanishing names and forms and rising into full awareness of That which is beyond, That which is Reality. The concluding line of another great *mantra* supplicates the Supreme Divine to manifest His grace within us as illumination "Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat – May He illumine our intellects". We are inheritors of heritage that tells us: You are the Light. Awaken that Light within you. Realise that great Light of lights beyond darkness, and become blessed. Live your life for this ultimate attainment and experience. Let us claim our birthright and move towards the great Light. This is the supreme rejoicing. May we all thus rejoice!

May God Bless You All!

■ Swami Chidananda

Be rooted in absolute truthfulness, even at the cost of your life, with absolute honesty and integrity; for **Truth is God**. One who is established in Truth can attain God.