

The Sacred:

Exploring a variety of religious traditions and spiritual beliefs from around the world

Unitarian Universalists accept different faiths and beliefs. We believe we grow spiritually by exploring different religions. We believe that you should be free to believe what you want. We believe we learn from other peoples' experiences and so can you.

In this session we will explore Diwali – a Hindu celebration celebrated around the world.

Diwali



Diwali is one of the major holidays of the Hindu religion. It is also called the “festival of light”. Diwali means “row of lamps.” Part of the celebration is to burn tiny clay lamps called *diyas*. The lamps are lit to drive away darkness and ignorance and as a symbol to the light within us. Diwali is a time of family gatherings, food celebration and *puja* (worship).

Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world. Worldwide - about 950 million people are Hindu – that’s three times the population of the United States! Most Hindus live in India and Nepal. Hindus believe in one god but pray to gods and goddesses who represent different parts (like beauty, truth, fortune) of that one god. Some have said that the Hinduism is the religion of 330 million gods. This is because they believe that each of us has god in us so we are all gods and goddesses.

The two gods celebrated during Diwali are *Lakshmi*, the goddess of wealth and Lord *Ganesh* god of auspicious beginnings.



Lakshmi

Ganesh

Diwali is celebrated in the United States too. In 2009, President Barack Obama became the first president to celebrate Diwali by lighting a lantern to symbolize the victory of light over darkness. In 2009 100,000 Hindus celebrated a Diwali Mela in the Cowboy's Stadium.



Diwali is celebrated over 5 days. Each day holds significant meaning. Dancing, playing cards, and giving gifts, and sending “Happy Diwali” greeting cards are all part of the Diwali celebration.



To honor Lakshmi and Ganesha, *Puja Thali* are used in homes and given as gifts. *Puja* is a type of worship that involves prayers, songs, and rituals. A *Puja Thali* holds all the things necessary to honor Lakshmi and Ganesha. A typical *puja thali* would hold a bell, a small *katauri* (bowl), a *matka* (steel glass) and a leaf shaped box to hold *roli chawal*, *mithaai* (Indian sweets), a diya or two, coins, incense sticks, flower petals, and icons or little statues of Lakshmi and Ganesh. *Puja* is performed in the evening



Rangolis, a colorful design painted with rice flour, are placed in the doorway to welcome the goddess *Lakshmi*.



Paper lanterns called *kandeels* are also hung outside of home.



- Is Diwali like any holiday you celebrate?
- How is Diwali like Christmas?
- How would you celebrate Diwali?

MATCHING

Draw a line from the picture to the Indian word



mithaai



katori



matka



kandeela



puja thali

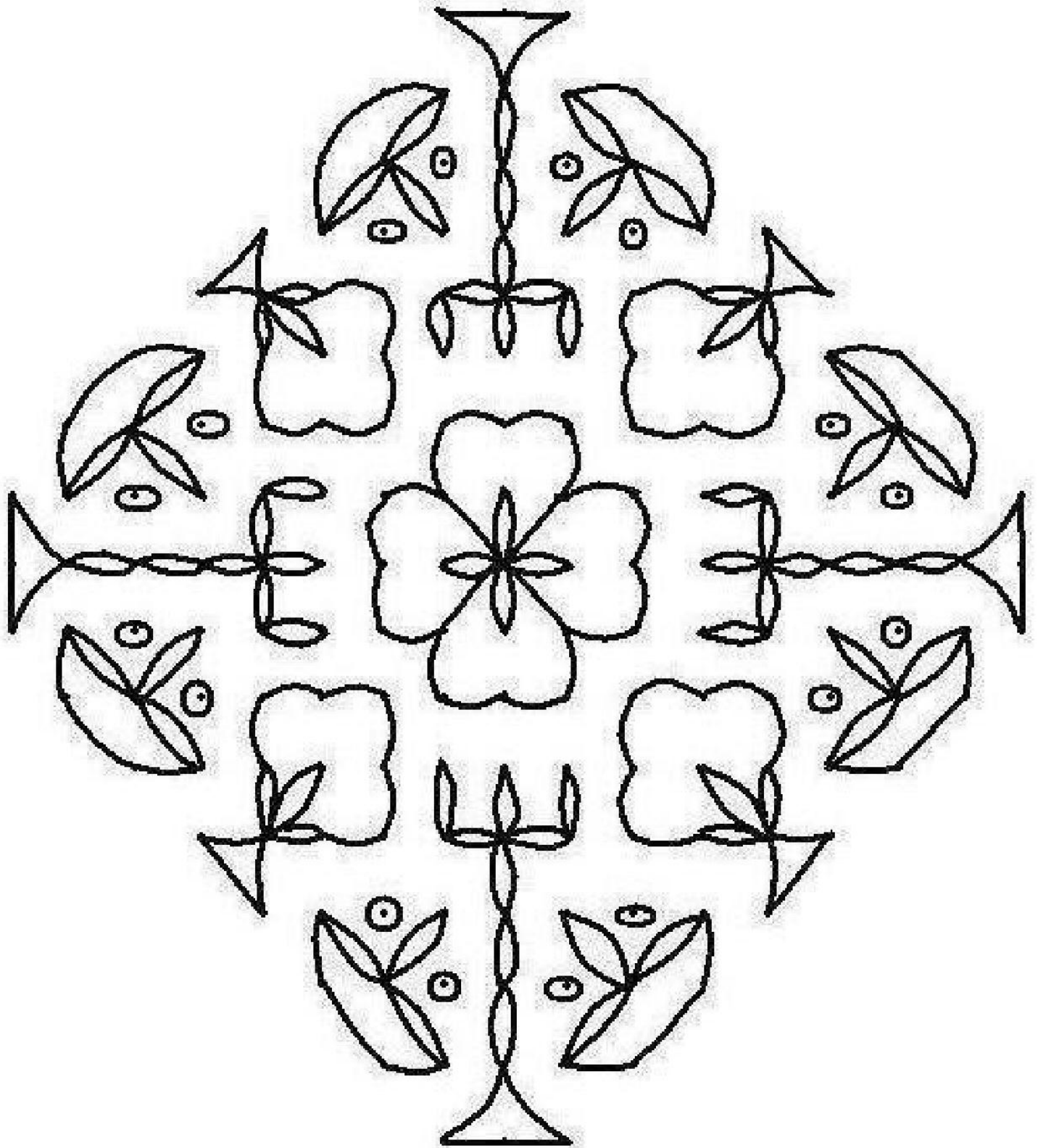


diya

Answers: (top down) – puja thali, kandeela, mithaai, diya, katori, matka

Diwali Rangoli

color rangoli with bright crayons, markers or chalk



ACTIVITES:

Websites about Diwali

<http://www.diwalifestival.org/>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diwali>

http://www.google.com/search?q=diwali+festival&hl=en&sa=X&rlz=1G1ACAW_ENUS423&biw=1441&bih=710&prmd=ivnsu&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&ei=fwMfTuLUN--FsALVjoXMAw&ved=0CEkQsAQ

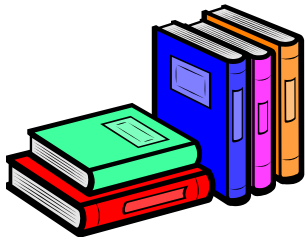
To watch a brief film by National Geographic about Diwali:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrrW3rO51ak&feature=related>

For Clinton Public Library hours and activities

<http://www.clinton.lib.ia.us/library-information>

Books related to Hinduism available at Clinton Public Library:



Kingfisher Book of Religions, Trevor Barnes – J291 BAR *pp* 32-45

The Eyewitness Book of Religion, Myrtle Langley – J200 LAN *pp* 18-23

A Faith Like Mine, Laura Buller – J200.83 BUL