



Sewa International Nepal Rehabilitation Project

Deepawali Report 2016



Deepawali in Nepal

In Nepal, Deepawali is celebrated as Tihar (Nepali: तिहार). It is a five-day-long festival celebrated during Yama-Panchak which starts from Dhan-Teras and lasts up to Bhai-Dooj. The five-day festival is considered to be of great importance as it shows reverence to not just the humans and the Gods, but also to the animals like crows, cows and dogs who maintain an intense relationship with humans.

Deepawali Celebrated by Earthquake Orphans

AT GIRLS HOSTEL IN CHITWAN DISTRICT

Girls staying in the Hostel in Bharatpur, Chitwan () merrily celebrated the beautiful festival 'Deepawali'. This hostel is funded by Bay Area, CA coalition of Livermore Temple, Indian Association of San Joaquin County (IASJC), Indian Association of Sacramento through Sewa International, USA. In

addition, IASJC is sponsoring 4 children annually under the Sewa's **Sponsor a Child** program for their upkeep.

Under the guidance of Krishna Kumari Giri, the President of the committee established to administer the hostel, and Savitri Dhakal, hostel warden, the girls in hostel observed the first day of Yampanchak by feeding the 'Crow'. Crow is regarded as messengers of Yama in Nepali society. The cawing of crows symbolizes sadness and grief in Hinduism, so devotees offer crows food to avert grief and death in their homes.



Similarly, on second day, also known as Narak-Chaturdashi, the girls fed dogs as a gesture of worshipping them. Dog is believed to be the gatekeeper of Lord Yamaraj, the god of death. On this day, people offer garlands, teeka (tilak) and food delicacies to the dogs, and acknowledge their cherished relationship with the humans.

Girls in the hostel along with the committee members participated in cleaning the Hostel Premises for Deepawali. In the evening they enjoyed decorating the compound with diyas, observing 'Choti Diwali'.

On the day of Deepawali, early in the morning, after their daily morning activities including meditation and daily prayers, they accompanied the warden in worshipping the cow. They had been practicing singing and dancing as a preparation for the 'Bhailini'. "Bhailini / Bhailo" and "Deusi" are traditional songs that are sung during Deepawali. Children and teenagers sing the songs and dance as they go to various homes in their community, collecting money, sweets, food and giving blessings for prosperity. Bhailo is generally sung by girls. At the end of these songs, the women of the house serve food and give money to these deusi/bhailo singers and dancers. In return, the Deusi/Bhailo team gives blessings for high income and prosperity.



The 'Bhailini' song indicates that it is related to king Mahabali, since the lyrics include "We were sent by king Bali". *Deusire* can be broken down etymologically as *Deu-* which means submit, and *Sire-* which means head. So *Deusire* means 'submit your head'. According to Hindu Puranas, King Bali gave his own head to Vamana, the fifth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Bali was performing the Aashwamedhya Yajna when Vamana approaches Bali and asks for three paces of land. Bali was known to be generous for giving alms to anyone who came to his palace. Bali agreed to fulfill his demand. To Bali's great surprise, Vamana with his two steps covered the Earth and the Universe and asked the great king where he would place his third step. Bali then offered his own head. Lord Vishnu, seeing the devotion of Bali, blessed him with a boon that he would ever be protected by Lord Vishnu. Bali due to his generosity, gained Lord Vishnu's favor and attained salvation. There is a belief it is good to donate in the month of Kartik (the month when Bali-*raja* donated his head).

Bhailo is traditionally played after worshipping goddess Laxmi in the evening on the day of Deepawali.



Hostel Girls in traditional Nepali attire, ready for Bhailini.



Girls performing dance in Bhailini song



Moment of relaxation after 'Bhilini'



Malati Pariyar, (one of the girls staying in hostel) placing small kalash at the door in hostel

On Bhai-Dooj, the fifth day of Yamapanchak, the children in hostel put 'seven-colored-tilak' to each other observing 'Bhai-Tika'.

Prior to Deepawali, the festival of Dusseraha too was observed by the hostel family. On Vijaya-Dashami, the tenth day of the Dusseraha, as per the Nepali tradition, a mixture of rice, yogurt and vermilion was prepared by the warden. This preparation is known as "Tika". The warden, Savitri Dhakal, President of the Hostel Administrating Committee Krishna Kumari Giri and other members put the tika and jamara (barley sprouts, which is sown on the first day of Navaratri, 'Ghatasthapana') on the forehead of the children in hostel and blessed them with abundance in the upcoming years.

The red color in tika symbolizes the blood that ties the family together. Elders gave "Dakshina", or a small amount of money, the girls at this time along with the blessings.



Kids with seven-colored-tika on their forehead with a Hostel visitor.

CELEBRATIONS IN NUWAKOT DISTRICT (BOY'S HOSTEL)

Kids staying in Hostel funded by Sewa UK at Bidur in Nuwakot district enthusiastically participated in Dashain (Vijaya Dashami) celebration as well as Deepawali. Shri Som Prasad Pandey, the Hostel guardian to the orphaned children staying in the Hostel, blessed each kid with 'Tika and Jamara' as a part of Vijaya Dashami ritual observed in Nepali Society.

Deepawali Celebration

On the occasion of Deepawali, the children in hostel participated in decorating their temporary home with utmost delight. On Deepawali day, in the morning, children were taken to Shri Som Pandey's residence. There they witnessed 'Cow Worship' performed by Pandey family. After the pooja, they were provided 'prasad'.



Shri Som Prasad Pandey applying 'Tika and Jamara' to the children



Hostel children with 'Tika and Jamara'



Hostel children having Prasad at Shri Som Pandey-ji's residence.

In the evening arrays of 'Diyas' and candle were lighted around the house. Kids participated in Laxmi Pooja too. Shankar Pandey, son of Shri Som Pandey assisted them in both the activities. Kids also participated in 'Deusi and Bhailo' program.

On the fifth day of Tihar, the children received 'Seven Color Tika' from Neeru Pandey Pathak (daughter of Shri Som Pandey).



Hostel children at Shri Som Pandey's home.