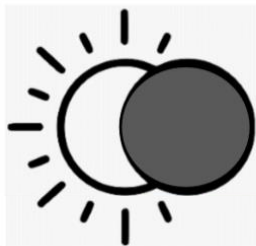


The
November
2023
Issue

What is in
this issue:

Día de
Muertos

Diwali



Día de (los) Muertos



Day of the Dead



Day of the Dead in English or **Día de (los) Muertos** in Spanish is a **Mexican** holiday that is also celebrated by **Mexican-Americans**. It is from November 1st to the 2nd. In 2008, the tradition was put on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by **UNESCO**. The animated movies **The Book of Life (2014)** and **Pixar's 2017 Coco (リメンバー・ミー)** show this festival.

It is on the small Catholic holidays of **All Saints' Day** and **All Souls' Day**. It mixes **Aztec** themes with **Spanish Catholicism** to celebrate **deceased** family and friends. This means family and friends who have died. It is like the **Christian** holidays of Christmas and Easter because all their roots are **religious** but nowadays many people only celebrate culturally. So, these holidays have a religious side and a **secular** (non-religious) side. It is different from **Halloween** because those **ghosts** are scary, these **spirits** are not! People visit **graves** and decorate **altars** to remember **loved ones**. It is very **lively** but **thoughtful** with bright flowers, candy, **skeletons**, and skulls.



Even though it is **Buddhist**, I think the Japanese **Bon Festival** is like the Day of the Dead. **Obon** honors the spirits of one's **ancestors**. It is a few days in the summer, usually August. People often have time off work to return to their hometowns to be with family. Together people visit family graves to give food and flowers to the dead. People also clean home altars and leave gifts for the dead. There are bonfires and the famous dance, the **Bon Odori**, for the returning spirits. The festival is not very religious anymore, but **seasonal**. People often wear *yukata*, play carnival games, see fireworks, and eat fried festival foods.



However, I am not Japanese or Mexican, so I am **NOT** an **expert** on these holidays. Let's read more about **Day of the Dead** and see! **What do you think?**





Symbols

Skulls (*Calaveras*)



JOSE GUADALUPE POSADA, *La Calavera Catrina*, c. 1910, lithograph

Skulls can be used in masks, candy, and **face paint**. When they are candy, they are usually chocolate or white **sugar skulls**. They are sweet with special designs. Sugar skulls can be gifts for the living and the dead. Many people do 'sugar skull makeup' online and for costume parties but it important that we be **respectful!** This is not just for fun, there is deep meaning.

La Catrina

José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1913) was a Mexican **illustrator** who created *La Calavera Catrina* (The Elegant Skull) to laugh at rich Mexican ladies who thought European culture was better than **indigenous** Mexican culture. She has become a key character in the holiday.

Aztec Marigolds

In **modern** Mexico, these orange flowers are called *flor de muerto*, flower of the dead. They are usually left on graves. Their bright color and strong **smell** help guide spirits from their graves to their family homes.



Traditions

Altars (*Ofrendas*) & Offerings



Altars are a beautiful way to honor loved ones who have died. They can be made at home or at graves. There can be three levels of the altar. The top level is the Catholic **heaven**, the middle is our **Earth**, and the bottom is the Aztec **underworld** of the dead. There is usually a picture of the person, Catholic **crosses** and angels, **paper banners** (*papel picado*), candles, **incense**, marigold flowers, skull toys, and more. Families **offer** food, drinks, and things the person loved. A traditional food is *pan de muerto*, or bread of the dead.

Visiting Graves

Families often go to the **graveyard** together to clean the graves and set up food, drinks, and flowers for their loved ones. Sometimes they might have a **picnic** there or stay all night with their **relatives**.

Parades

This holiday is about family, but it is also about **community**. There are big parades and parties in cities around the world, especially **Mexico City**. Many people wear fancy dresses, suits, costumes, and makeup to sing, dance, and remember together.

Remember: Day of the Dead is NOT Halloween!



XOXO,
Sheila



Diwali : The Festival of Lights

Have you ever heard of **Diwali**? The 'w' in the world is actually said with a 'v' sound. The word 'Diwali' comes from the **Sanskrit** word, 'deepavali' which means 'rows of lighted **lamps**' in English. It is the biggest and most **important** holiday of the year in India. It is a five-day festival of **light** in the **religions** of **Hinduism** (ヒンドゥー教), **Jainism** (ジャイナ教), and **Sikhism** (シーク教). It is always sometime between mid-October and mid-December every year. This year it is from November 10th – 15th, 2023 with a focus on November 12th. Although each religion's stories about this festival are a little different, it always celebrates **peace** and **positivity**. All the beautiful little **candle** lamps called 'deepa / diya' teach us that light can always win against the **darkness** in this world.



LUSH FRESH HANDMADE COSMETICS

Just to help us understand, Diwali is as important to Hindus as **Christmas** is to **Christians**. On the first day of the festival, people clean their houses and buy gold items and kitchenware for good **luck**. On the second day, people put the little lamps around their houses. They also make designs on the floor with colored **powder**, which are called 'rangoli.' On the third day, people have *Lakshmi puja* which is **prayer** to the Hindu **Goddess** Lakshmi. Sometimes, other **gods** like Ganesha or goddesses like Kali too. Then, they eat delicious food and watch **fireworks**. On the fourth day, people visit friends and family with gifts because it is the first day of the Hindu new year. They might wear new, **traditional** clothing. On the fifth and last day, brothers visit their sisters who are married to eat a meal together.



Did you know that there are many people with Indian **roots** around the world? They are not only in India! The United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, **Guyana**, Nigeria, Kenya, **Trinidad & Tobago**, Singapore, **Fiji**, and more all have large **communities** with Indian roots. These communities have been in these countries for a long time and can have their own **unique**, mixed **identities**.



For example, do you know Kamala Devi Harris? She is the **Vice President** of the United States of America! Her mother was a **scientist** from India and her father was a **professor** from Jamaica. So, not only is Kamala Harris the first **African-American** and **Asian-American** vice president, she is also the first woman! Wow! What about Indian American Hollywood star Mindy Kaling? Indian Canadian comedian and YouTuber Lilly Singh? How about actress and Miss World 2000 Priyanka Chopra Jonas from India? Do you know Rishi Sunak? He has been **Prime Minister** of the United Kingdom since 2022. He was born in the U.K., but his parents have Indian roots. He is Hindu and actually became prime minister on Diwali in 2022! How amazing! He is the first non-**white person** to be prime minister and the first Hindu.

This was very big news in India due to the history of British **colonialism** (植民地主義) there. In fact, many of the countries above were also **controlled** by the **British** in the **past**. Now, we can all do our best to **learn** about and **respect** other people's religions, roots, and **holidays**! Please see the Diwali postage stamps from various countries. We are all a little different, but we are also all the same... **human beings**!



In fact, I (Sheila) had never even heard of Diwali until I was in **college**. I first saw the word 'ディwali' in my Japanese textbook in an activity about world holidays. Isn't that funny? My family is Catholic (with Irish roots), so I was always in Catholic school from ages 5 – 18. I only had one 'World Religions' class. Then in college, in my religion **major**, I mostly studied **Buddhism** (仏教) and **Shinto** (神道). So, when I heard about Diwali, I was so excited!

I also made a new friend in college who was Indian American and Hindu, so she taught me a little about her **culture**. How beautiful! I love to look at the **gorgeous** Indian traditional **fashion** the most. Let's enjoy!

XOXO SHEILA