



Priya with Ami (5th grade) and Viv (4th grade).

What is your most beautiful memory of the Diwali celebration? In September of 2020, my kids and I drove across the country to Boston to spend a few months in a pod with my parents, my sisters and their families. That was the first time since having kids that I've celebrated Diwali with my parents and sisters. It meant everything to watch my parents' and my kids' joy in celebrating together. And to hear my father retell the Ramayana - this time with his four granddaughters helping out!

What does this celebration mean to you? My whole upbringing, I heard my father, Dilip, share the story of the Ramayana at an annual Diwali celebration my parents hosted. My father is an accomplished storyteller - he always portrayed the drama of the saga, while also conveying its deeper meaning. It gives me great joy to now be able to share the story with own kids and their classmates.

Why did you decide to bring it to the classroom? I was raised proudly Jewish (from my mother) and Hindu (from my father). I have fond memories of my mother teaching about Chanukah and other Jewish holidays in my class when I was a kid. So it was important to me to carry that tradition on when I had my own kids. And I know from that experience that kids are interested in hearing diverse stories, tasting new foods and connecting with culture through crafts.

When organizing this event, what did you expect? I have been celebrating Diwali in my kids' classrooms for several years. So I knew to expect open-mindedness and excitement from the kids - and I wasn't disappointed!

How did it go? Each year, I have been blown away by the kids enthusiasm and engagement. This year, maybe because I've been doing this for a few years, the kids all jumped in to help me tell the Ramayana saga, which was so gratifying. The kids also asked many interesting, insightful and sometimes stumping questions! And they all decorated beautiful diyas (ceramic lamp)! I also loved seeing the kids decked out in their bindis and mehndi tattoos, which was something new that Kamal and Lydia added this year!

Is there something that surprised you? Almost every single kid ate a samosa - more than a few ate 2 or 3! And they were a little spicy.

Lydia and Kamal, with Arjun (2nd grade) and Meenu (4th grade)

What is your most beautiful memory of the Diwali celebration? My memories of the Diwali celebration growing up in India are all about: firecrackers, colors & lights and lots of treats - both sweet and savory.

Firecrackers -



Kids were usually collecting catalogs of firecrackers for several weeks prior to mark those they wished to buy. My Dad would surprise us with a package of assorted firecrackers on Diwali Eve. Kids would gather in the neighborhood streets to see and trade firecrackers.

Colors & Lights -

*On Diwali Eve, we would decorate the house with divas (clay oil lamps). The whole town would be lit.

*On Diwali Morning, my older sister would start her Rangoli (designs made by powdered colors) at the entrance of our house around 5AM. My younger brother and I would assist her by handing down the colors. By 7AM, the whole street would have finished their Rangolis. We would take a walk through the neighborhood to check them all, before they were destroyed by vehicles driven in the street.

Treats - Sweets & Savories -

The tradition is to make enough treats to pack goodie bags for family, friends and neighbors. This involves days of preparations. Usually families would have a cooking party to prepare those big portions of treats.

*On Diwali Morning - after Rangoli and Firecrackers, kids will be sent around to deliver the goodie bags. When kids are done with their delivery route they are excited knowing that there will be tons of bags delivered to their home. My siblings and I would look for our favorite aunts' goodie bags - they always made sure to add something special for us.

What does this celebration mean to you? I enjoy the planning, preparing, and the excitement leading up to the celebrations! This event brings family and friends together that continues on as we recollect those in memories.

Why did you decide to bring it to the classroom? Lydia and I are always on the look-out for celebrations of any kind. Since Priya (Ami and Viv's Mom) mentioned about organizing a Diwali event in the school, Lydia and I were fully onboard with it. It's a good way to remind our kids to celebrate the known and yet to be known. Celebration is like hydration for our wellbeing, sometimes you have to remind yourself to do so.

When organizing this event, what did you expect? I believed our kids to be curious and excited about doing something different from school routine. I wanted to remind them that there is so much to explore in the world.

How did it go?

Kids were way more excited and curious than I expected. Priya narrated an abridged version of Ramanayana. Kids were very receptive on listening to the story and asked for more details & reasons on all the possible plot holes. They were all very creative and had great fun doing the arts and crafts. I want to say a big "Thank you!" to all the teachers for accommodating our elaborate event.

Is there something that surprised you? We shared Samosas (Savory dish) with the kids that I didn't expect them to appreciate as much as they did. Also, they did fire-up their creative sides to make good use of Bindhi and Mehendi Tattoo.

Why Samosa ?



Priya - I do think that fried snacks, like the samosa, are emblematic of Diwali because they hark back to the oil lamps that marked the celebratory journey home for Rama and Sita.

[Recipe](#)

If you observe a tradition or celebration you'd like to share with the class, please contact your child's teacher. We love learning!