

NEWS

Diwali celebration lights up campus

BY GISELLE MIRANDA / NOVEMBER 3, 2016



The lighting of candles and clay lamps at temples during Diwali night. Stony Brook celebrated Diwali at the Charles B. Wang Center Chapel. *KHOKARAHMAN/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS VIA [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)*

The annual traditional Hindu celebration Diwali, or the “Festival of Lights,” illuminated the Stony Brook campus on Wednesday night, Nov. 2 at the Charles B. Wang Center Chapel.

“Flowers, lights signify the celebration,” Professor Kamal K. Sridhar, the primary host of the event and associate director of the Center for India Studies, said during her presentation.

In front of some 80 people, Sridhar shared that Diwali is celebrated in honor of the triumph of good over evil, the return of the god Rama to Ayodhya, other stories of Hindu gods Vama, Lakshmi and Krishna, and the importance of the enjoyment of life.

“I am really close with Dr. Sridhar, and actually we didn’t know about this event until last minute because our friend was the one who told us,” Ruchi Khatiwala, a sophomore biology, chemistry and athletic training major on the pre-med track, said. “She is actually a volunteer for this event, so that is the main reason why we came. I am Hindu and wanted to celebrate Diwali.”

Diwali, also known as Deepavali, meaning rows of lamps, began in the Wang Center Chapel with the Puja Ceremony with prayers and verses. Shortly after, the Light Procession progressed and everyone gathered outside around the fountain between the Wang Center and Administration Building.

The moonless night was filled with the illumination of small electronic candles, which lit up the darkness to announce to the gods the victory of good over evil.

“Diwali is very important to me and is one of the biggest events because it comes right before New Years and [is] the festival of lights, a celebration of our Gods,” Shivani Majmudar, a sophomore Spanish major on the pre-med track, said.

The significance of this cultural event is the awareness of inner light and its representation of good versus evil. Items often used to celebrate this special holiday are lamps, fireworks, bonfires, jewelry and colorful garments. They are seen as uplifting and welcome good spirits, fortune, and success.

“I am usually home for Diwali, so the Puja we do at home, but unfortunately because of stress I couldn’t come home for Diwali weekend, so this is my way of staying in touch with our culture and religion,” Majmudar said.

The annual event is meant to unite the Hindu community and introduce others to the traditions.

“At least 3-4 years we have hosted,” Sridhar said. “My husband, S.N. Sridhar, the director of the Center of India Studies, is usually in charge, but this semester he is on sabbatical in India and he is writing a book, so I am in charge of this event this year.”

The event presented by the Mattoo Center for India Studies came to an end with traditional Halwa and rice pudding.
