

[Digital Dharma](#)

Category : [May/June 2000](#)

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RELIGION

Why?

Why do we light a lamp? Why do we chant "Aum" and perform arati? Do we just do it, or does it mean something? We may not know it, but almost every Hindu custom and tradition has a scientific, logical, historical, social or spiritual significance.

Many of these have been forgotten or been dubbed superstition. On the webpage:

www.hindumythology.com/why.htm, the late Swami Chinmayananda explains the reasons for the simple, enduring traditions in many Hindu homes and, along the way, dispels many false beliefs. Questions like "Why do we ring a bell?" and "Why do we blow a conch?" are answered. Swami also explains the common mantras that accompany each ritual practice. Why do we have a prayer room? To remind us that the Lord also resides in the house.

CD-ROM

A Gem of a CD

Gems and precious metals have fascinated every world civilization, but India, source of many of the world's most famous gems, has a special affinity to the precious stones. "Gems & You," produced in

India by Shrichakra Jewels, explains the Indian experience in detail. One section tells how gems can heal, another talks about the esoterics of gems. Also included is scientific information about each gem. PC. us\$50. Shrichakra Jewels, 5 Sainivas Modi Baug, Ganeshkhind Road, Shivaraj Nagar, Pune 411016, India. Web: www.shrichakrajewels.com.

CELEBRATIONS

Have a Fun Holi Fest

Do you enjoy covering friends and relatives with outrageous colors each year during Holi? Here are two websites with instructions ranging from the best food to prepare to tips on dunking people in specially prepared mud baths, to the correct assault tactics with water balloons. Two sites:

www.holihangama.com and www.colorsofindia.com/aboholi.htm also provide interesting information on the

history of Holi, such as the original substances used for Holi colors, plus poems, stories, games, screensavers and greeting cards.

ASTROLOGY Sacred Calender

Have you ever wondered why is it that one day everything works out great for you, and another day you barely make it through the challenges? Hindus believe it's partly caused by the day's astrological configuration, and often refer to the day's panchangam or astrological calendar to find out. At www.hindu.org/sciences/panchangam.html, you can download

panchangams for 76 different places in 24 time zones. Replete with a easy-to-use manual that will help chart your life.