

## **Why Do We Light A Lamp?**

In almost every Indian home a lamp is lit daily before the altar of the Lord. In some houses it is at dawn, in some twice a day – at dawn and dusk – and in a few it is maintained continuously (Akhandā Deepa). All auspicious functions commence with the lighting of the lamp, which is often maintained right through the occasion.

Light symbolizes knowledge and darkness, ignorance. The Lord is the “Knowledge Principle” (Chaitanya) who is the source, the enlivener, and the illuminator of all knowledge. Hence light is worshipped as the Lord himself.

Knowledge removes ignorance in the same manner that light removes darkness. Knowledge is a lasting inner wealth by which all outer-achievement can be accomplished. Hence we light the lamp to bow down to knowledge as the greatest of all forms of wealth.

Why not light a bulb or tube light? That too would remove darkness. The traditional oil lamp has a further spiritual significance. The oil or ghee in the lamp symbolizes our vaasanas or negative tendencies. The wick symbolizes the ego. When lit by spiritual knowledge, the vaasanas gets slowly exhausted and ego finally perishes. The flame of a lamp always burns upward. Similarly, we should acquire such knowledge as to take us towards higher ideals.

While lighting the lamp we pray:

***Deepajyothi Parabrahma  
Deepa Sarva Tamopahaha  
Deepena Saadhyate Saram  
Sandhyaa deepo namostute***

English translation as follows:

***I prostrate to the dawn/dusk lamp  
Whose light is the knowledge principle (The Supreme Lord),  
Which removes the darkness of ignorance  
And by which all can be achieved in life.***