

Tania's Diwali Celebration!



By Kanika G

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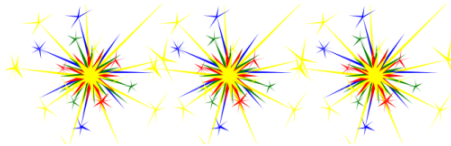
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Tania's Diwali Celebration

Tania was excited. The last day of school was finally over. Tania's Diwali vacation had begun. Diwali was still a few days away. But there was a lot of preparation to do. Diwali is the Indian festival of lights. It is celebrated with sweets, lights, decorations, games and firecrackers. Tania was now old enough to enjoy it all, and she had been looking forward to it for a while.



Mama had planned some fun activities for Tania. First on the agenda was to decorate *diyas*. Tania asked "Mama, what is a *diya*?"



Mama said "A *diya* is an oil lamp made of clay. We pour oil into the clay bowl and make a wick using cotton. When we light the oil soaked cotton, the flame lights up the area around. It is very pretty. The clay lamps are plain and brown, so we are going to paint them."

Mama and Tania sat on a large plastic mat on the living room floor and decorated the lamps with various designs. They used a lot of the flashy silver and gold colors which would shine beautifully in the lamp light.



Diwali week is the time to do some house cleaning and decorating. Tania and Mama spent a morning cleaning up and arranging cupboards and drawers. So in the afternoon they decided it was time for some fun. Mama told Tania they would be making a *rangoli*. She saw Tania's curious, puzzled expression and explained, "A *rangoli* is a design made on doorsteps as a welcome sign. We are going to use rice flour to make it."

Mama took some rice and put it in the grinder. Tania pressed the button and made rice flour. Then Mama and Tania took the rice flour to the doorstep.

"Now what do we do Mama?" asked Tania.

Mama said, "Sprinkle the rice powder to make some nice design like this flower here."



Mama also used a little bit of some colored powders she had bought. Tania and Mama had an enjoyable afternoon making a lovely floral *rangoli*.

But enough about decorating. Diwali would not be complete without tasty Indian sweets. Mama had bought some dry-fruit sweets from the sweet shop.



But Mama always made *gulab jamuns* at home. Tania helped Mama make a dough consisting of milk powder, wheat flour, baking powder and cream. They then made little round balls of dough the size of large marbles and deep fried them till they were golden brown. Mama also made a sugar syrup flavored with rose water. Once the fried balls of dough cooled a little, Mama and Tania put them in the syrup to soak.



Soon it was the night before Diwali. Diwali is on the night of the new moon, so the night before Diwali is the darkest night of the month. It is believed that the ghosts and spirits prowl the earth on that night. In some parts of India, it is customary

to light fourteen *diyas* and place them all over the house to ward off the ghosts. Tania and Mama lit their beautifully decorated *diyas* and placed them in safe places around the house.

On Diwali morning, Tania woke up early. Grandma and Grandpa would be visiting in the afternoon. Mama made a snack of *pani-puri* and *dahi-puri* for everyone. Tania helped set up the table with the *puris*, curd, mashed potatoes, tamarind chutney and of course the super tasty *pani*: water flavored with cumin, rock salt and mint coriander chutney.



Grandma and Grandpa arrived around 2:00 p.m. Traditionally the family

spent Diwali afternoon playing cards. But to include little Tania, this Diwali they played *Uno*. Instead of the usual betting, the victor got to collect a certain amount of candy from the rest at the end of each game. Tania thoroughly enjoyed herself. She was an expert at *Uno* and collected a good amount of candy. Everyone chatted and ate *pani-puri* while playing *Uno*. This was Tania's first time eating *pani-puri* and she found it to be a messy and enjoyable experience. They also ate *gulab jamuns* and other sweets.



The afternoon passed by quickly with everyone having such a good time. Soon, the sun had set, and it was time for fire crackers. This was what Tania had been looking forward to most of all. The housing society had

set aside some space for the children to safely light crackers.



Tania lit sparklers, fountains and a rotating ground fire cracker called a *zameen-chakra*. The previous year, Mama had only let her watch. It was so much more fun to actually light the crackers.

That night Tania went to bed happy and tired. It was the best, most exciting day she had ever had.

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