



Diya Lamps

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Diya Lamps are oil lamps lit during the festival of Diwali to symbolize prosperity in the new year.

They are small pots made from clay and could be described as 'thumb pots' as they are made by pressing the thumb into a ball of clay and shaping it. They are then baked in a kiln until they become what is called 'bisque' fired, firm and ready for painting.

They are then painted bright colours, filled with oil and lit for Diwali in October or November. The light is intended to cancel out the darkness as we enter the darker months.

The Five Elements

Diya Lamps are painted using fingers rather than paint brushes. This is because our fingers represent the Panchatatva, which are the five elements.

- The thumb is angushchya which represents the sky.
- The first finger is called tharjani which is the air or wind.
- The middle finger is madhyama which represents fire.
- The ring finger is thanishkar which belongs to water.
- The little finger is called kanishcha which is the soil.

Traditional Painting Method

In the past Diya Lamps would be painted, with fingers, using colourful ground materials like turmeric or rocks like ochre. Today many people paint the Diya Lamps using acrylic colours.

When people started to paint the Diya, they painted with the ring finger because much of the human body is made up of water. It was believed that by starting with this finger they were working with the water element and bringing calm to their work. The colour was always painted on in a clockwise direction.

Next Diya painters would use the thumb, which represents the sky, to paint.

The next finger used was the first finger or pointer which represents air or the wind.

Traditional Painting Method (continued)

Traditional Diya painters would never paint with the middle finger (fire) directly after the ring finger (water) because it represented how materials like metal, wood and clay can become weakened if they are heated once exposed to water.

They would work with another finger, like the first finger and the thumb after water before using the middle finger. The thumb and first finger represented sky and air, in a way 'drying' the Diya before applying 'fire'.

Since the Diya is made of clay (earth), the little finger must be used last to show gratitude to Mother Earth for using her.

Today many people use paint brushes to paint the Diya, applying beautiful intricate patterns before decorating with beads.

Diya Lamp Ideas

Videos

Making the Diya:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RI2XfyIS72U>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJC96Kf0AHU>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Va9d3inMGk>

Painting and decorating the Diya:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TV-5jNGfO2U>

Diya Lamp Ideas (continued)

Videos

Lighting the Diya:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7AlMWyrrEI>