



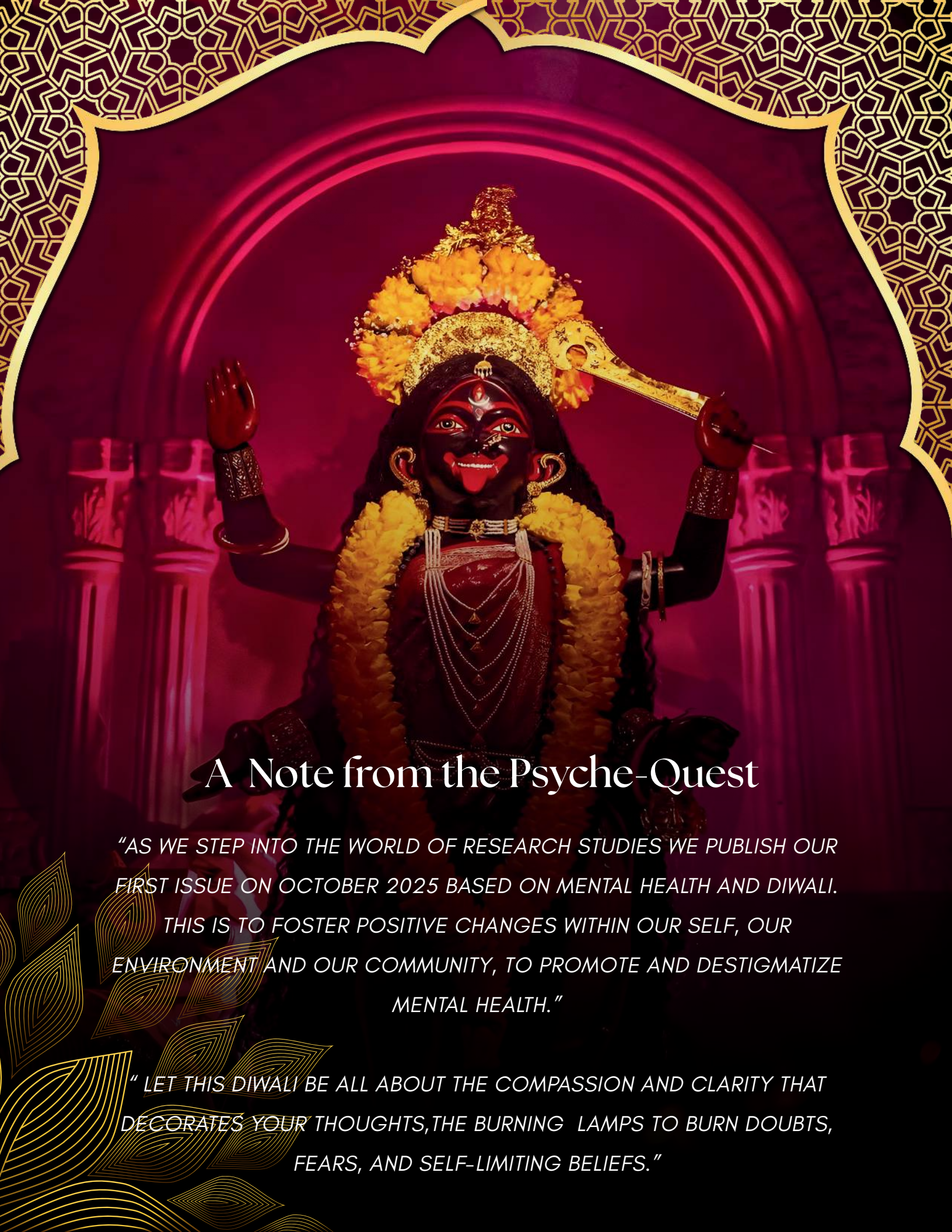
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THE PSYCHE-QUEST

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A Note from the Psyche-Quest

"AS WE STEP INTO THE WORLD OF RESEARCH STUDIES WE PUBLISH OUR FIRST ISSUE ON OCTOBER 2025 BASED ON MENTAL HEALTH AND DIWALI.

THIS IS TO FOSTER POSITIVE CHANGES WITHIN OUR SELF, OUR ENVIRONMENT AND OUR COMMUNITY, TO PROMOTE AND DESTIGMATIZE MENTAL HEALTH."

" LET THIS DIWALI BE ALL ABOUT THE COMPASSION AND CLARITY THAT DECORATES YOUR THOUGHTS,THE BURNING LAMPS TO BURN DOUBTS, FEARS, AND SELF-LIMITING BELIEFS."

"SMAŚĀNAVĀSINĪ TVAṂ HI CAṄḌAMUṄḌAVINĀŚINĪ, MAHĀMĀYE MAHĀKĀLI MAHĀKRŪRI NAMO 'STU TE"

Kali, a quintessential embodiment of femininity and power that truly represents the infinite void (śūnya), which goes beyond the psyche's call to authenticity. This showcases the self-sovereign power and the limitless upper hand she has as a mother, warrior, protector, destroyer, and, above all, as a liberator. Maa dwells in the cremation ground bared, with truth stripped of all illusions, the only feminine energy that can be felt. Her wild, disheveled hair, (mukta keshi) with scattered vermillion (sindoor) all across her forehead, represents her fearlessness. The garland of skulls unravels the transcendence of ego and the endless cycle of birth and death. With Lord Shiva lying motionless which depicts consciousness; energy (Kali) dances upon it, forming the very concept of reality itself. She, who dances on the battlefield,



teaches the world that fear is holy only when it is faced. From the perspective of Jungian philosophy, Maa Kali serves as the Id representation or the shadow aspect of feminine psyche, the psyche that has been repressed since ages, especially women's socially censored emotions such as rage, sexuality, destruction, and autonomy. Kali portrays an alter ego of Parvati or Lakshmi and constructs a defined balance between the potent archetypes of female power. She is the subversion of the stereotyped embodiment of Shakti as calm and nurturing in a patriarchal space. As the unapologetic eruption of the repressed forces, i.e., when a woman refuses to limit herself to the boundaries set by society. Goddess Kali reclaims female anger in a raw form and as something sacred, opposing the stigma of female rage which is often associated with hysteria or irrationality or women being too sensitive and emotional.

According to Maa, compassion doesn't mean weakness, as she challenges the stereotype of motherhood, being submissive. As depicted in Hindu mythology, Goddess Kali is often referred as Rakshakali, Jaganmata, and Matangi, which depicts how fierce of a protector and a nurturing mother she is. As said by many, when the world turns away, she opens her arms. But in today's world, she is the mantra of a wake-up call to all the ignorant eyes. With her fashion statement of wearing just a skirt made of severed arms and a garland of skulls, she depicts liberation from male gaze which is beyond shame and objectification. She is the portrayal of the demand for an utopic world where women can be respected and valued. In the contemporary world where a woman faces infinite challenges, Maa Kali becomes an icon of hope and grace, and a symbol of awakening, a vow that no woman shall ever be another Nirbhaya (Delhi) or Abhaya (Kolkata).



THE FORGOTTEN HEROES



The following article has been composed after conducting a series of qualitative interviews with several members of the Group D staff at the Siliguri Institute of Technology. Their voices, experiences, and insights form the foundation of this work, offering a deeper understanding of the human narratives.

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is one of the most significant and awaited festivals in India. It symbolizes the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness, and hope over despair. For both the lower middle class and middle class, Diwali is not just a festival, it is an emotional occasion that brings families together, strengthens social bonds, and offers a sense of joy and belonging, even amid financial or work-related struggles.

নয়ন মেলে দেখে দেখি তুই চেয়ে - দেবতা নাই ঘরে ।।
 তিনি গেছেন যেথায় মাটি ভেঙে করছে চাষা চাষ -
 পাথর ভেঙে কাটছে যেথায় পথ, খাটছে বারো মাস ।
 রৌদ্রে জলে আছেন সবার সাথে ,
 ধূলা তাহার লেগেছে দুই হাতে -
 তাঁরি মতন শুচি বসন ছাড়ি আয় রে ধুলার 'পরে ।

-রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

Among the lower middle class, Diwali celebrations are often modest yet heartfelt. These families may not have the luxury to spend lavishly, but they invest their savings and emotions into making the festival meaningful. A few weeks before Diwali, they begin cleaning and on the day of diwali they decorate their homes with diyas, rangoli, and simple lights. The workers who earn low daily wages can't afford too many crackers or expensive gifts, they often get their children just sparkle sticks, and light diyas.

Many Group-D members often are not provided with many holidays during the festivities, which make them suffer from burnouts even on such auspicious days. It's time we raise our voices for the unheard, it's time we bring change by enforcing mental schemes for the forgotten ones.

One of the staff members we interviewed stated that "Every single year he has to work and is not provided with any holiday, so it is basically an ordinary day". The female staff members had answered stating, "They have to cook, clean, decorate and perform the religious rituals, along with taking care of the members". Interviewing the females the average statement was about the "banana tree as an important symbol of the day". The banana tree symbolizes prosperity, auspiciousness and divine blessings. A non-Hindu member we interviewed stated that the meaning of Diwali for him is cutting off negativity from our lives, bringing prosperity in our lives". Diwali beautifully reflects both unity and diversity in society. The differences in celebration across socio-economic classes remind us of the varying realities people live in. Yet, it also shows that happiness does not depend on riches, but on love, sharing, and the light of goodwill. When every home, rich or poor, glows together, the world truly becomes brighter.

-Anya Malakar

THE RITUAL OF CLEANING HOUSES (SAAF SAAFAI) DURING DIWALI, IN CORRELATION WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPONENTS



The Festival of Lights, Diwali is one of the most celebrated festivals of India and worldwide. Beyond the vibrant lights, tempting sweets and joyous gatherings, there lies a tradition in different cultures, deeply rooted in Diwali festivities, that is deep cleaning (*saaf saafai*) and organizing our homes.

• **Welcoming the Goddess of wealth and Prosperity—Mata Laxmi** is worshipped during Diwali in many cultures and it is believed that she visits and blesses homes that are clean and organized. Cleaning our homes during this time symbolizes readiness to receive abundance.

• **For new beginnings**—As Diwali is celebrated during the autumn season, the time of traditions and change, cleaning our homes signifies removing past year's heaviness and making space for new opportunities, just like trees shed their leaves to make space for fresh growth.

OFTEN OVERLOOKED, CLEANING AND ORGANIZING DURING DIWALI HOLDS NOT ONLY CULTURAL, SPIRITUAL BUT ALSO PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE —

Cleaning and organizing our homes can directly impact our mental health. Evidence suggests that having a messy, cluttered environment interferes with the ability to concentrate in individuals. The act of cleaning and decluttering can boost mood and improve focus.



Clutter or messy surroundings are directly linked with negative emotions like confusion, tension, irritability, stress, anxiety affecting our mental wellness, while cleaning our surroundings enhances positivity and provides a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Studies show that cleaning and organizing also helps in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety levels. A clean home also impacts our physical health along with our mental health, people living in clean houses are more likely to be physically healthier.



To conclude, Diwali is not just a festival of lights but is also the time for our inner illumination and spiritual awakening. Cleaning and organizing our homes during this period, symbolizes removal of negativity and stagnancy, while welcoming positive energy and clarity. As said by many, "As the dust settles, new beginnings unfold".

BEYOND THE LIGHTS OF DIWALI: A REFLECTION ON FESTIVITY & MENTAL HEALTH

Have you ever noticed that many people feel sad and even more depressed during the festival season than on usual normal days? In our surroundings, many people are silently battling with their anxiety, depression, and loneliness, which remains unknown to us. The festive season in India is marked by its cultural beliefs, where we joyfully celebrate among ourselves, which brings togetherness, but this season is really a challenging time for those who are suffering from mental health issues. The added pressure of socializing, financial strain, and disrupted routines can exacerbate anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions.

Individuals experiencing winter-pattern SAD exhibit reduced levels of serotonin, a neurotransmitter responsible for mood regulation and emotional stability. While the Indian festival season is culturally associated with joy, social cohesion, and increased social interaction, it may paradoxically intensify depressive tendencies in vulnerable individuals. Therefore, it can be inferred that although the festival period symbolizes illumination and renewal, it also coincides with environmental and neurobiological factors that contribute to seasonal mood disorders.



Diwali, a festival of light, brings a sense of warmth and positivity. People clean and decorate their homes with decorative lights and flowers. This phenomenon can be linked to classical conditioning, where these stimuli condition our psyche, enforcing positivity and harmony. At this time, people in Bengal often worship Maa Kali, who is the symbol of destruction and creation. In other states, Devi Laxmi is worshipped during this period. Therefore, understanding the intersection of cultural celebration and mental well-being becomes essential in recognizing how external festivity and internal emotional states often coexist in complex ways.

Mostly students, job holders, and interstate migrant workers who live far away from their homes, wait eagerly for this time of the year when they can finally go back and celebrate Diwali with their loved ones. But this wish isn't fulfilled for everyone. Many do not get their leave applications approved, and especially for those we talk less about the migrant workers, the situation is even more difficult. Most of them belong to economically underdeveloped states, and despite various financial differences, they try their best to fulfill their responsibilities by returning home. Yet, somewhere along the way, this simple wish, this desire to reunite with family during the festival, quietly dies.

IN THE END, WHILE FESTIVALS LIKE DIWALI BRING LIGHT, UNITY, AND JOY TO MILLIONS, THEY ALSO CAST A QUIET SHADOW OVER THOSE STRUGGLING WITHIN REMINDING US THAT TRUE CELEBRATION LIES NOT ONLY IN THE LIGHTS WE HANG AROUND US, BUT ALSO IN THE COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING WE SHARE WITH THOSE AROUND US.

-ADITI BOSE

THE SILENT SUFFERINGS

Firecrackers have become an ubiquitous aspect of celebrations in India, extending beyond the festival of Diwali to events such as birthdays and New Year's Eve. However, it is alarming to note that approximately 50 to 100 individuals lose their lives annually due to fireworks accidents during the manufacturing process (said by a social activist & director of the Human Resource Foundation). The firework industry predominantly employs workers, who often face inadequate facilities, including a lack of restrooms.



For India's firecracker industry, where imaginative sparks light up the night sky, the Diwali sparkle fades. Millions of people's livelihoods are at risk due to state-imposed bans, particularly those of women who work in the background. "What will we do now?" asks Lakshmi, her hands stained with residue of last year's work. There is uncertainty surrounding the ₹5,000 crore industry, which employs 3 million people, 40% of whom are women. Is it possible to balance environmental concerns with the rhythm of controlled production?

Furthermore, child labor is a constant issue, particularly in unlicensed and home-based factories, where children work for up to 13 hours, handling harmful chemicals like gunpowder & chemical salts and being vulnerable to verbal, physical, and mental abuse. These issues ultimately affect the mental well-being as well as physical health of the workers. People who survive explosions may later suffer from long-term PTSD. Anxiety in the workplace distresses their life and sleep schedule, causing them to suffer silently just to survive. Many of them immerse themselves in alcohol and tobacco products, which eventually worsens their mental health.

Employees working in firework industries risk their health to protect and provide for their families. Whatever preventive measures taken by them do not help them much in protection. Firework employees face many health-related issues as their work demands exposure to fireworks, gunpowder, toxic chemicals, and explosives. They are vulnerable to accidents and injuries which can be fatal or make them unable to continue to work for a lifetime.



Some of the health problems risking the lives of the employees working in firework industries are, eye injuries from sparks and particles, respiratory issues due to chemical exposure, burn injuries from explosive materials, skin problems, muscle strain resulting from long working hours and many more. To conclude, we should ensure the safety of these employees who risk their lives to make Diwali, the festival of lights, indeed happy.

-SUBHASHINI PAUL, ADITI BOSE AND AASHMITA BASU

THE UNSPOKEN STORIES

-WHY INDIAN CELEBRATIONS ARE NOT DESIGNED FOR WOMEN'S WELL BEING



India is known for its rich culture, profound diversity, festivals and elaborate celebrations. Diwali is one of India's grandest festivals, celebrated not just for its deep spiritual meaning but also for its remarkable power to unite people from diverse communities. But as Haruki Murakami said "when there's light, there must be shadow". While other family members enjoy a holiday, women often experience an increased workload driven by traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Beyond external expectations, a powerful force at play is internalized misogyny. Growing up in a patriarchal society, many women internalize the belief that their role is primarily that of a caregiver and nurturer, especially within the domestic sphere. This can manifest in several ways: guilt or shame for not fulfilling her "duties", sacrificing their own comfort and well being for their families, and perfectionism: the desire to be the "ideal" wife. This doesn't end here, the invisible labor very often gets overlooked and unappreciated.

The mental and emotional labor: planning and coordination, shopping, logistics, maintaining family harmony, managing social expectations, hosting guests and triple burden for working women. All of which collectively results in physical and emotional exhaustion. Impact on Mental Well-being: The cumulative effect of external pressures and internalized expectations can be detrimental to women's mental health. Increased Stress and Anxiety: The sheer volume of tasks and the pressure to meet societal expectations can lead to heightened stress, anxiety, and even panic attacks during festive seasons. Depression and Burnout: Chronic exhaustion and a lack of personal time or recognition can contribute to feelings of hopelessness, irritability, and ultimately, depression and burnout. Silenced Voices: Women may feel unable to voice their exhaustion or dissatisfaction for fear of being perceived as "complaining" or "untraditional," leading to suppressed emotions and emotional distress. Exacerbation of Existing Issues: For women already struggling with mental health conditions, the added stress and demands of celebrations can exacerbate their symptoms.

Research shows that crimes against women, including sexual violence and assault, significantly increase during public festivities due to factors like increased crowding, alcohol consumption, and a general breakdown of routine surveillance. Festivals can create an environment where harassment is more likely, as dense crowds and reduced lighting make it harder to monitor individuals. Some studies also link certain cultural practices and lax enforcement to higher crime rates during these events. In India, studies show a significant spike in violence against women during Holi, where the saying "Bura na mano, Holi hai" ("Don't feel offended, it's Holi") is used to justify unwanted advances. Perceptions of vulnerability: When women drink, criminals may perceive them as more sexually available and vulnerable. This mindset is used to justify and excuse sexual aggression. Proposed solutions include enhanced security: increasing security personnel and implementing surveillance measures can help deter and respond to crimes. Clear anti-harassment policies: festivals can adopt and clearly communicate explicit anti-harassment policies to create a safer environment for attendees. Improved reporting mechanisms: providing clear and accessible avenues for reporting incidents, and ensuring a sensitive and swift response from authorities, are crucial steps for encouraging victims to come forward. Education and awareness: raising awareness about the prevalence of sexual violence at festivals and promoting respectful behavior can help change social norms.

DIWALI: THE LIGHT THAT UNITES US

Festivals are never just calendar dates, but times when life itself feels richer, when the hearts beat as one, regardless the divisions of community, creed, or origin. Holi explodes in color and laughter, Diwali shines with lights that cut through the night, Durga Puja fills the streets with faith and majesty, but at their heart, they all celebrate the same thing: connection, joy, and the shared warmth of being human. As Diwali draws near, houses are cleaned spotless, Diyas light up, prayers are softly spoken, sweets are exchanged, and friends and family come together. All these actions are so much more than ritual; they represent our strongest human tendencies

মোরা এক ব্লে দুটি কুসুম হিন্দু-মুসলমান।
মুসলিম তার নয়ন-মণি, হিন্দু তাহার প্রাণ।।

-কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম

Humanistic Psychology shows us how to celebrate these tendencies, the urge to connect, to feel compassion, to seek meaning and authenticity within ourselves. Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow talked about self-actualization and man's need for real connections; in this context, the festivals are living testimony that our quest for connection is evergreen. Positive Psychology layers something more, speaking to the value of gratitude, joy, and flourishing. Each smile shared, each diya lit, each sweet shared is a little something that deepens relationships, fosters happiness, and ties people together in a collective sense of well-being. Diwali especially is a cultural thread, tying family, friends, and communities together, reminding us that our human connections can move beyond mundanity, sameness, and distance. And in this interweaving of light, laughter, and compassion, the underlying truth is revealed: beyond designations of religion or caste, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, we are all searching for the same things. Connection. Recognition. Joy



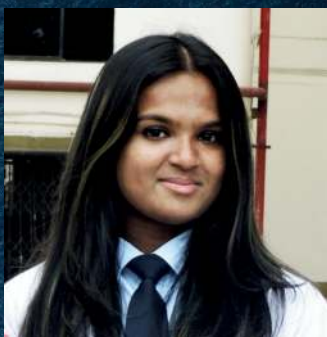
Festivals call to mind that the spark of the human is in every heart, that in every flicker of the lamp and every shared laugh, we catch sight of the divine in each other. When light's radiance rises, even the most arrogant shadows are taught to bend. As the light of Diwali lamps illuminates the globe, it intertwines a variety of cultures into a brocade of light and oneness. There is a line that captures this essence:

***Nafrat ver ki tor deeware Pyar ka pul banana hai,
Ek Duje Ke sang sang,
Aage badhate jana hai.***

"Break the walls of hatred, build bridges of love; walk hand in hand towards harmony."

-SUPRIYA PANDIT AND AASHMITA BASU

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HEAD, WRITING-LEAD, RESEARCHER AND PHOTOGRAPHER

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