

# NEW YEAR, NEW IDEAS

Want something different when it comes to celebrating Diwali?

**Seema Chowdhry Sharma** urges you to try new ways of marking the festival of lights

**F**estivities come around every year, and most of us love spending time looking for perfect gifts for our loved ones. We party, meet friends and relatives, gorge on sweets and gourmet meals and buy lovely outfits for ourselves. And then the next year, when it's time for festivities yet again, the same cycle repeats itself...

Willing to step back from it all and break the sequence this year? If you want to make the season of celebrations really special in 2006, why not invest in spreading a genuine sense of goodwill and warmth? Here's what we thought were a few great ideas that could help make Diwali a wee bit distinctive. Feel free to add more and have a rocking time!

## A REAL GIFT

Why not put those boxes of 'mithai' or chocolates out of your mind this Diwali! Instead, present a loved one with a True Gifts donation gift voucher and let them



feel the joy of being able to sponsor skills training for girls in slums, or pay for a meal for elders at an old age home, or help a mentally challenged patient get her medicines for free.

True Gifts is a unique concept started as part of the **Bhoomika Trust**, wherein over 80 gifts from 10 NGOs, at prices ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 20,000, are available for donors to select from. Once the donor decides which cause she

wants to support (gifts encompass various categories such as health, mental health, children, and elderly groups), the money is given to an NGO of the donor's choice. "We pass on the funds to the NGO that the donor picks and it utilises the donation according to the donor's request. In return, we provide the donor with a gift voucher which she can present to a friend or relative," explains programme manager Latha Subramaniam.

The Bhoomika Trust has tied up with 10 NGOs including Sri Arunodayam, which works with mentally challenged and spastic children, The Banyan, which works with mentally ill destitute women, and Nethrodaya which works with visually impaired individuals etc. "We charge a nominal processing fee (Rs 50 for gifts under Rs 1,000 and Rs 100 for gifts over Rs 1,000) to enable us to monitor the utilisation of the funds and give the feedback to the donor." Interested?! Send in your queries to [bhoomikaindia@yahoo.co.in](mailto:bhoomikaindia@yahoo.co.in) or log on to [www.bhoomikaindia.org](http://www.bhoomikaindia.org).