

## CHAPTER - V

### DEEPAVALEE

#### Introduction :

It cannot be certainly told that when the festival of Deepavalee began in good old days. However it is beyond any doubt that, the present form of Deepavalee has come down from very ancient times. This has been proved, when some of its aspects are co-related with many legends in ancient times.

In the 11th century, Alberooni, a learned khonva gentleman visited India. He had described the social traditions and customs in those times. From those records it can be concluded that Deepavalee festival was celebrated in the same manner as it is celebrated in modern times.

In ancient times the importance of Lord Shiva and Vishnu was greatly emphasized by the followers of those two deities. Those followers conjoined the relation of many traditions, customs, festivals to their deities. The followers of Vishnu considered Krishna as the incarnation of Vishnu and they insisted that the Deepavalee should be celebrated in honour of Lord Krishna. The more Krishna began to be respected, the more fictions were included in his life-history. However one can probe into the period of the Vedas and the

Upanishadas. The period of these two is called as sutra-kal. It is about 2000 year B.C. If one examines thouroughly the social conditions in these days one would notice that many of the modern festivals have descended from Gruhya - samskaras in those god old days. In those days any house master had to seven pak-yajnas. The rituals of those Yajnas were so simple that they were neither expensive nor trouble some. This pak-yajna included charity, kindling of fire, offering of valueable things, donation of food and clothings to deserving Brahmins etc. These pak-yajnas are performed every year in different months. They are classified as :

- 1) Ashtaka
- 2) Parvana
- 3) Shraddha
- 4) Shravani
- 5) Aagrayana
- 6) Chaitri
- 7) Aashvayuji

Some consider the month of Kartika as the first month of the year. This was as per orders of the then kings. So, a practice came in vogue to celebrate this first day of the year with great festivities and with great joy.<sup>1</sup>

Meaning of Diwali :

Diwali is the most important festival of Hindus. Diwali is the wrong from (Apabhransha) of the word ' Deepavalee'. This festival

lasts from the fourteenth day of the no-moon-fortnight of Ashwin up  
2  
to the second day of Kartika.

Regionwise Celebration :

In some parts of Maharashtra on this occasion the farmers and some others make dolls of cow-dung on the ground. They are called as Pancha-Pandavas and Kunti. Then they are worshipped and they are offered the Naivedhya made from newly harvested rice. Those dolls are dried and burnt on the full-moon-day. Kheer is cooked on that fire. In Bombay some white collored people make a doll of cow dung in the court-yard and keep earthen lamps burning on them. In this way they worship the five pandavas.<sup>3</sup>

In Southern Konkan sweet dishes are made from pohe. And all friends and relatives are co-ordially invited. This obviously means that every one must visit his kith and kin. In each house pieces of fruits are kept. Each one must test at least one piece from it and then sould proceed. This custom helps to remove from the minds of people any sort of ill-feeling or enmity and or any evil thought. On the auspicious day of Diwali all evil thoughts should be washed off and only ties of love should be strengthened. Just as merchants and businessman close doown all their old accounts of the last year and they donot continue old debts in the new account books in the same

man. A common man should also close down all old account of quarrels, misunderstandings and he should start with everything a new. This is the message of this festival and its custom.<sup>4</sup>

Bombay being a main centre of business, Laxmi-Pooja is celebrated on a very large scale. Famous merchants and businessmen celebrate it with great devotion. There is greatest burst of fire-orackers everywhere. There is fire electric-lightening and Bombay acquires glorious from in these days. Most of the merchants are Gujarathis. Their new year viz. vikram - samvat begins from the first day of kartika. They start their new accounts from this day. Some people play chess as a religious ritual in order to please goddess Laxmi and spend much money earned during the previous year. In other parts young women from lower class go on singing songs on the streets. They are gifted with sweets by the shop-keepers. In Konkan and in some parts of Maharashtra there is custom to wave lighted lamps around the faces. After that karita ( a name of fruit ) is broken and tested by all. In such parts new cloths are bought during krittika festival and not during Diwali.<sup>5</sup>

In South India and Assam it is associated with Lord Krishna's victory over the demon Naraka. The important feature of this celebration was a ritual bath before sunrise in the holy waters of the river Ganga. A manuscript written some two hundred years ago and now preserved at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of Poona, mentions the following matchless qualities of Ganga-jal on human life,

it is cool, exhilarating and tasteful, pure, nutritious, worthy of cooking, digestive, liberates from sin's reduces thirst, promotes detachment and brings wisdom ?

In Uttar Pradesh, however this festival is associated with beginning of the business or work year.<sup>6</sup>

Taken in all Deepavalee festival comprises of five principle items spread over five days viz. worship of wealth, the celebration of Vishnu's victory over Narakasura, worship of Laxmi, victory of Vishnu over Bali, and diceplay and the exchange of brotherly and sisterly affection.<sup>7</sup>

#### Diwali - Duration and Time :

In case of seasons, it is repeatedly asserted that in India Autumn and spring are the best seasons. Between these two the glamour of spring is more enchanting only in places of lakes and trees and shrubs. However, the glamour of autumn is seen in every nook and corner of the India. May it be the land of deserts or may it be the land of waters, autumn is glamorous there. In autumn, when it is plentiful, even deserts and other lands too get food and clean water. If this be so which other season can be chosen for the worship of goddess Laxmi, in the land of India, which is famous for farming ?

Therefore on this very season right from the pauper upto the prince everyone gets excited with joy and worships the goddess Laxmi. This is the most ideal thing from the point of view of spiritualism.

There are two months viz. Ashwin and Kartika in this season. The month of Kartika is considered as useful for the worship of the Laxmi. This is because - kartika comes after the rainy season. And during kartika only all corn and crop is made ready. In the month of Ashwin Corn and Crop is not ready everywhere. So how can country like India, which is mainly dependent upon farming, worship Laxmi in the form of crop and corn; so long as that corn and crop is not ready all over the country. Thus kartika month is the only befitting month for worship of goddess Laxmi.

About the celebration, on no-moon day there is not much necessity of explanation. The festival of lights would not be so much influencing on the fullmoon-light. So the festival is celebrated on the no-moon-night. There is no more reason for this. In thee months of autumn the germs of maleria and other diseases grow more. In the light of the sun or moon they grow less. And it at all they grew their power is not so much as it is in the darkness. So, Deepawalee is to be celebrated on the no-moon-day; when the darkness is to be minimized. By doing this the germs automatically die due to that light. Evening is the time which is also useful for the lighting

up the lamps. In the evening the germs, generating in cold or hot, gather together. In the night the germs breeding in heat are not found and in the day germs breeding in the cold are not found. So evening is the most befitting time for the celebration.<sup>8</sup>

We will see in detail about every day, which are celebrated in Diwali.

1) DHANA - TRAYODASHI :

From religious science the festival is only for three days. However Bali-pratipada and Yama - Dvitiya are also included in this festival. The five days of the festival bear different names and each day is associated with different religious rituals.<sup>9</sup>

The Deepavalee festival is of four days begins from this very day. In fact this is the festival of 'Dhanwantari'. It has no relation what so ever with Dhan - wealth. It has related to Dhanwantari - a jewel, that had come out of sea. When the sea was churned fourteen precious jewels were found out of the sea and Dhanwantari was one of them. By illustrating the story we can interpret that - Indians found out Dhanwantari - the greatest physician, the health master. This Dhanwantari came to be regarded as the deity of health and hygiene.

What a great aptness is there in worshipping the goddess of health and hygiene before enjoying the great joy of eating.<sup>10</sup>

2) NARAKA - CHATURDASHI :

The second day of Deepavalee is known as Naraka - Chaturdashi. There is legend about this Lord Krishna killed the most boastful Narkasur, on the fourteenth day of dark fortnight of Ashwin. There by Lord Krishna proved the secret of his life. It was ' to protect saints and to destroy the demons.'

Due to destruction of Narakasur there was excitement of joy every where. Lord Krishna come back with a spot of Narakasura's blood on his forehead.<sup>11</sup> As soon as he returned home A Nanda gave him auspicious bath. Ladies weaved lighted lamps around his face and expressed their joy. All the city celebrated joy. As a memory of this war and victory, Naraka chaturdashi became main day of Deepavalee.<sup>12</sup>

3) BALI - PRATIPADA :

Bali pratipada is the third day of Diwali. Shri Vishnu had told that this celebratio should go on for three days and nights. In memory of the king Bali.



Religious Performances :

A picture of Bali and his wife Vindhyaavati should be drawn in the middle room of the house and it should be worshipped.<sup>13</sup> In memory of that great King Bali, people draw many designs of Rangoli. They make different pictures by pasting white rice.

On this day there should be a tug of war between the so called high cultured people and the so called untouchables. This game is known as - 'Yushtika - Karshan'. It should be played in a get-together way.<sup>14</sup>

Vaman : The Dwarf Avatar :

From the fifth avatar onwards begins the series of avatars in human form. The first in this series is the dwarf (Vaman) who, like all the other avatars, came to restore the shaken<sup>15</sup> equilibrium in the world. This incarnation as a dwarf was undertaken to regain heaven to the gods. Bali the grand son of Pralhad was King of the three worlds; Vishnu appears before him as a dwarf and asks a boon. The king grants him what he asks - all the he can step over in three strides. Vishnu places one foot in heaven, one on the earth and at once regains the whole for the gods.

We can find various forms of legend in skanda purana, vedas, satpatha-Brahman, Ramayana, Mahabharat, Vishnu puran etc.

The Hindus declare that Vishnu gave Bali the choice of going to heaven, taking with him five ignorant people or of going to hell with five wise. He choose the later for there is no pleasure any where in the company of ignorant a bad place with good company is preferable.<sup>16</sup>

The myth of a dwarf who covers the three worlds ( the whole universe ) with three footsteps is first related in the Vedas. There the feet is as cribed to Vishnu himself - at the time a deity of minor importance. By the time Vishnu had evolved into the great god. We know today the feet was apperantly considered not so exxtraordinary for him and thus Vaman avatar was substituted for Vishnu and performed this divine exploit.<sup>17</sup>

#### The Gist of the Story of Bali :

The story of legend of Bali reveals some universal principles of everlasting values.

The first truth that is revealed is that, we get super norms. They are of two types. One norm is that of a giver / donar / Data. He is of a great spiritual height. Though Bali knows that

Yachak ( taker ) was his enemy. He had come to ruin him, Bali never returns from his vow. A promise is a promise and it must be kept at any cost, even at the cost of one's own life. The nobility of heart of Bali is unique.

Secondly in the form of Vaman, we understand the spiritual greatness of a Yachak. He sticks upto one and the same demand. He is not tempted by other promises or offers.

In vaman we see how an enemy should be treated. Though Vaman had come to ruibl Bali he never abused him. Neither did he ill-treated him. On the other hand he praised Bali from his heart and not from lips. Then Vaman gave Bali a boon. It was that, Bali would be worshipped for ages to come. That is how an enemy should be treated. As soon as the enmity is over there must rouse nobility.

In the description of the omni-pervading god we realize, what real god means. It is not an image or so. God is omnipotent; omnipresent, omniscient force in the universe.

So the legend of Bali is the greatest subscription in Hindu-culture.

4) BHAU - BEEJA :

In the Indian culture the importance of women is honoured the most. A woman is thought to be an incarnation of sacrifice, penance and mercy. Not only this but she is an image of 'Karmayoga' ( Duty for the sake of duty ), selfless service. This karmayoga is aptly described in the Geeta. And an Indian woman is just befitting to the description. When she acquires ' Motherhood ', she is the saviour of the world or the most powerful goddess of all, the goddess. The other side of this coin of Motherhood is sister - the great book ' shrimadbhagwat ' tells us that -

' Dayaya Bhagini Murtih ', this means a sister is a living image of Mercy.<sup>18</sup>

On the 2nd of the bright half of kartika occurs a very fine festival called Bhratrudvitiya. The Bhavishya states that - on the 2nd tithi of kartika bright half Yama was treated by Yamuna to a dinner in her house. Therefore this tithi become declared in the world as Yamadvitiya. Wise men should not take mid-day meal in their own houses but they should take food from the hands of the sister through affection on doing so increases ones welfare and prosperity. GGifts sould be made to sisters. All sisters should be honoured with golden ornaments, clothes, reception and meals.<sup>19</sup>

The Importance of having Brother :

From the very ancient days of Vedas having a son has been regarded more than having a daughter. In case there was no son they regarded daughter as their son and gave her whatever they possessed. Even then having a son was valued more. If there is no son they used to have ' an adopted son'. Every daughter also considered it important to have a brother. The society looked down upon a girl who had no brother. The Rigvedas in one of its verse described the pitiable condition of such a brotherless sister.

Abhrataro Na Yoshano vyanth patripo Na Janayo Durevah!  
Eapasah santo Anrita Asatya Idam padamajanata Gabhiram!!

( Rigveda 4/5/5 )

This means that - ' The sinful people who behave with lies only create naraka for themselves . such peoples are like brotherless maiden who wonder aimlessly. Such peoples are like those married women who hate their husbands and who wonder aimlessly.' This verse shows that, it was or is beneficial for bachelor young maidens to have a brother from the point of view of future life. It seems that in those days the maidens who had no brothers had great difficulties in their marriages. The Atharrva-vedas described such maidens as glamourless or lusterless (1/17/L). The Rigvedas told that such maidens had to lead a bachelors life till their death (Rigveda-2/17/7). The author of smriti have showed disrespect for such

brotherless maidens. The great saint Yajnavalkya had dectated that a boy should not marry a brotherless maiden.

Therefore from the very ancient days having a brother has been regarded as very much important as well as blissful. Those maidens, who fortunately had the blessings to have a brothers, however should not forget their own brother on the day of Bhaubeej, even though they were married and they lived in a very different house. They must call theirown brothers for a dinner and each one of them should give gift and should express their love virtueally.<sup>20</sup>

#### Hindu Society and Condition of Women :

The condition of women, especially in the Hindu society is not so good as it should be. some says that, the public-opinion is changing much. Even then the general condition of women is not very happy. It shall not be happy so long as the Hindu society bears in mind. The dead prncples and so long as it does not change unless compelled by the circustantial forces. This miserable condition of the Hindu women was characterized by slavery in behaviour, weakness of the mind and atheism about vaueable principles of progress of the society. So the helpless Hindu minds tries to console itself by keeping some remote ideals before itself. In doing this fortunately, it is not getting discouraged. That is because we had ideal mothers like - Madalasa, Mainawati, Sumitra, Vidula and Jijabai. As regards ideal

wives, India has been in the foremost position even up till now. However the number of ideal bachelor woman is much less. They are Sulabha, Gargi, Shabari and Maitreyee. These few women remained bachelors / Maidens and regarded Moksha as the highest achievement in life of course, it is definitely not worthwhile that this number should be so less as that. This might be due to the fact that in almost all religions viz. Hindu, Buddha, Christian and Islam the ancient people were doubtful about the capacity and ability of women to acquire spiritual attainment.

The ideals of brave mothers, brave wives and brave daughters are not many with us. Never the less they are sufficient. In Drupadi and the Queen of Jhansi, we find the fearless spirit. Though such women are few in our society, that number is enough to make our society luminous.

Among all these ideals there is one weakpoint. Because it is weak point we feel it much. We have almost no ideals of the love between brothers and sisters. Lord Krishna had one sister viz. Subhadra still he regarded Draupadi as his sister and helped her greatly. If this example is deleted what remains behind ? And the answer is unfortunately negative. The great ancient Aryan poet Valmiki depicted all phases of human emotions. But why did he forget to point the emotional relationship between a brother and a sister ? Leaving

aside an ancient and historical literature if we turn to fiction, in this field also the great writers have never shown the facts of their genius by depicting of least imaginary ideals of brother - sister love. The great monarch shriharsh trodded many jungles to set free his sister Rajashree. If the poets and playwrights of other countries had noticed this event, what great epics, they would have entertained !

Our ancient social thinkers gave a dictum that one should not marry a girl, who has no brother. What a fall is there of these social thinkers in respect of social religion ! One reason is put forth for this. That is of the child - marriage system. A child girl when married, had no chance to set up in relation with her brother. But this reason is not valid enough because this child marriage system came into practice in recent times. In ancient times it was not existing on the contrary there is a graphic description of a love between brother Yama and the sister Yami. When yama died Yami could not prevent her tears. At last all the gods exhaled night. And when night crept in, Yamee's sorrow was lessened. Since then came the night and since then came the world's ' today and yesterday '.

When our dejected mind has a glance over the folk-lore, our mind becomes excited with joy, because the whole folk-love is adorned with the poetic description of the love between brother and



sister. This is but natural. Since this brother and sister love is inborn with the world itself. This love is instinctive and overpowering all the rest of the emotions. Though the most learned or the great literary artists may forget it, to mention how can the common public mind forget it ? That common public simpleton shall ever remember it. So it has depicted that, love in folk-lore and folk tales included there in sweet, emotional memories, events of brotherly and sisterly love. That public mind included the festival of Bhaubeej in the family life with that particular intention. Therefore, that festival has become a part of social life. That festival has remained and will remain for ever. The shastras might not have considered it as an inevitable one, but the public mind has considered it as the most inevitable one and so, we must observe this festival of Bhaubeej with the same age-old importance.<sup>21</sup>

It's Modern Utility :

A) Cleanliness :

The story of Narkasura can be metaporphically interpreted. In the story ' Naraka ' means dirt, dust, cowdung etc. during the rainy season there is dirt, dust and Mud. There are many germs and insects which are harmful to man. After the rainy season, during the month of Bhadrapad it gets very hot - That dirt and dust also get dried. Its foul smell spreads in the air. Many people fall viction

to it. So immediately after the month of Bhadrapad i.e. during Ashwin there is the urgent necessity of complete cleanliness. That is the killing of Narakasura. The ancient Narakasura was killed once for all. But this Narakasura i.e. the dirt, dust, foul smell must be killed every year. So before the festival of Diwali the dirt and rubbish in the house and around the house should be removed. It should be thrown into ditch and should be converted into manure. This is very necessary in cities but more necessary in the villages. All young strong youths should draft a scheme should undertake the collective cleanliness of the village. This cleanliness should be done not only in public places but also in private ones. There should be no dirt and dust at any place.<sup>22</sup>

B) Respect for newly harvested crop, cattle :

The new year commences from Diwali and newly harvested corn is brought home. So right from the times of Vedas upto now this festival of welcoming the newly harvested corn has been celebrated with great devotion by the Hindus.<sup>23</sup> We must receive warmly newly harvested crop not as a ' food ' but as the ' goddess of food '.<sup>24</sup>

There is custom to worship cows. The horns of the cattle are coloured, coloured papers, ribbons are pasted over them.

There are red spots pointed on the bodies of the cattles. Then they are worshipped. A capatti and a half of a coconut is tied around their neeks and they are made to run fast. On this day milkmen and dairymen move lamps around the faces of the cows and buffaloes and the owners of the cattle offer some gifts. This custom is found all over the Maharashtra.

Cow-keeping is considered as very important in Hindu-religion. It is supposed that every family-holder must keep a cow. Children get nourished with cows milk. So, a great affection is expressed about cows. In the good old times of the vedas people struggled hard to get cows and to keep cows.<sup>25</sup>

C) Family Gathering :

An Indian festival like Diwali, is a picturesque web into the making of which so many strands have gone religious, social and cultural raiment tht adorns the entire fabric of society, cherished and preserved by all alike men and women, old and young, in all the quarters of the land, north and south, east and west. There may be variatious in details; difference in social values attached there to observable in the celebrations in the different parts of the country.

Thus for instance in Maharashtra the Diwali is not merely a religions festival but an occasion for family reunions, the

meeting of brothers and sisters and also the commencement of the fresh crop-year. But in such Maharashtra in the Western Ghats, the occasion is more looked upon as the part of the seasons and coming of the sunny weather.<sup>26</sup>

Significance :

Prag-jyotisha-pura, the city of light, in the east ( the east, where the light first breaks in ) - is the scene of the battle. The contestants are shri Krishna, the avatar of supreme god Vishnu and Bhauma - born of bhumi; i.e. son of the earth, also known as Narakasura, the Titan of Hell. This Titan has made life impossible on earth. He even strays into the region of the celestials, robs the ornaments of Aditi, the great creatrix of the gods and carries away by force the daughters of the gods and conceals them in his mountain retreat. Who else can this Titan be but the Dark force of ignorance i.e. born of the earth-that afflicts the life of the earth and her peoples, the ignorance that imprisons light and knowledge ? The correspondance between Bhaumas imprisonment of these kanyas and the concealment of the vedic cows by vala or the pains is too patent to be missed. Also glaring is the similarity in the means of their deliverance. The might god himself has to come, smash away every obstacle, thick and hard and kill the arch-enemy with a blow. There is Indra that does it, here it is shri Krishna. Once this is done,

the daughters are liberated and are wedded to the Lords towards whom they rightly aspire. The theme is the same. A decisive conquest of the challenging Darkness and Ignorance by the liberating power which results in the release and the flooding of the concealed light.

There are other legends, current in different parts of the country, in connection with the Diwali. But the most ancient and sanctified by hoary tradition is the Krishna-Narakasura episode, with which we associate this festival as common with great men, that have gone before us. So the lights are on. The path is cleared and man's journey towards his destiny has been rendered safe by the leading power. This is the message flashed out by the little leaping flames, which all of us, Indians delight in lighting up once a year, to remind ourselves as it were that the period of sloth, *tamas* is past, the days of progress and endeavour have come.<sup>27</sup>

The event which this occasion is, all over understood to celebrate is on and one alone. Diwali or more correctly Deepawali, the row of lights, is the joyous celebration of the death of Titan of Hell, Narakasura, at the hands of the Lord Krishna; the Lord has eliminated, at long last, the Beelzebub, the champion of darkness, the contamination that afflicted the Earth is washed away, and the myriad lights are put on to signalise. His victory which is indeed won for us, His dear children.

The origin of this celebration is, of course, to be traced to our mythology. But a myth be it noted is no yarn. It was Raskin, who described the myth as a story with a meaning attached to it other than what is apperant the characteristic feature of it, he went on to add, is smething extraordinary about its circustances.<sup>28</sup>

From the time vatsyayana, Diwali has been a festival of National Importance, celebrated throughout the country of universal nature in which one and all participate. It isan occasion for gaiety and splendour. With its illuminations and fireworks it lightens the mood of the people and prepares them to face the new year with a joyous heart.<sup>29</sup>

People exchange greetings and send sweets to their neighbours, friends and relatives.<sup>30</sup> A modern development of Diwali celebration is the sending of greeting cards, wishing friends and relatives a ' Happy Diwali and Prosperous New Year '<sup>31</sup>.

Just as all good things come to an end, the Diwali festivities too draw to a close. And with that ends the first part o the festival season in India.<sup>32</sup>

*Same as on page 115.*

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