

CHAPTER - IV

DASSARA

VIJAY - DASHAMI

Introduction :

Vijaya-Dashami is celebrated on the tenth day of Ashwin. The glaring history of victorious Bharatiya is reflected in this day. The day is of importance to the four varnas - (sects) in Hindu society. Brahmins who are supposed to worship and develop learning, worship the goddess Saraswati and adopts new phase of knowledge. Kshatriyas, who with their bravery conquer new fields, worship their weapons with a view to protect our country and conquer our enemies. Vaishyas, whose duty is to create more wealth, collect more corn from fields and make our country rich. Thus our country becomes 'Sujalam and Suphalam', which means having plenty of water and plenty of food.¹

Origin of the Word :

The word Dassara is derived from Dasha-meaning ten. It meant the tenth day. There are seeds sowed near an earthen pot on the first day of Navaratra. Those seeds sprout and small shoots come out. They are pulled out and offered to the goddess on this day. In Maharashtra, Milkmen and class four people worship Lord Krishna seated on the cobra kaliya from pratipada to Dashami. This festival

is famous as, ' the festival of Shilangan'. People wear a tuban and affix a newly harvested branch of a plant in that turban Shilangan the crude / rough form of the main word ' Seemolanghan ' (meaning there by crossing the borders).²

The word Dassara is originated from the Sanskrit word, ' Dashah '. ' Dasha ' means ten and ' Aah ' means a day. This³ festival is on the tenth day of the bright fortnight.

Some doubts / objections about / against Dassara :

Some people say that Vijaya-Dashami was and is celebrated in commemoration of Shri Ramachandra's victory over Lanka. But there is no proof to that in shastras. In the great book of Nirnaya Sindhu and Chaturvarga Chintamani, there is one statement of kashyap. According to that, it is proved, that on this day Shri Ramachandra set out for victory of Lanka. So, it is simply a fantasy to regard this day as the day of victory. Of course, it is true that, on this day Rama set out for the victory.

Reality :

Even prior to muslim period, this day was celebrated by all kings in those days as the day of conquest over other countries. Of course Lord Ramachandra made the greatest conquest over Lanka and

his conquest was commenced on this day. Ever since then this day come to be regarded as the day of victory or conquest. This is the greatest peculiarity of this day.

Time and or Duration :

While considering the time and duration of Navaratra, it had been concluded that in Bharat Varsha spring and Aulumn are the best seasons. Between these two spring is not so much useful for any march of conquest because - immediately following spring is the hot summer. And summer is not so much helpful for the movements of armies. In modern times also military officers have their four programmes in autumn or winter.

Kalidas, the great poet, while describing the conquest procession of Maharaj Raghu has said that - The rivers were convenient to be crossed. Mud was dried in the season of autumn. This gave an encouragement to the armies of Raghu. So armies were getting ready, but the natural impetus given by the autumn was more encouraging.

However the astronomers say that, any journey if commenced during te sun's orbit of Dhany, Mesha, Sinha, Rashis or in the months of Pousha, Vaishakha, Bhadrapada then that journey successful. The sun's existence in Kanya or Tula Rashi are some what useful; the sun

in Kanya or Tula rashi on the day of Vijaya - Dashami in Vaishakha it is too ' hot ' , in Bhadrapada it is almost raining. So, both the seasons are not useful for victory - encampment. Naturally, as a via-medium the month of Ashwin was considered as the most useful one.

The tenth day in bright fortnight is considered as the best by astronomers it is seconded as is able to cool down the sorrows, is able to grant success and is able to give benefits. (A statement made by Vashishtha in piyusha-dhara.)⁴

Myths and Legends Regarding the Festival :

There is one story in the fifth canto of the Ramayana about Raghu-vansha.⁵ The another myth, that - the Pandavas in exile in the house of virat. During these days they hid their weapons on the tree of shamee. After the exile they worshipped the tree of shamee and took back their weapons. It was the tenth day of Ashwin.⁶

There is legend of defeat of the Kauravas by the Pandavas in disguise.⁷

The concluding day of this Dassara or Vijaya - Dashami, it signifies the day of Rama's victory over Ravana. To remember this, a huge monster like figure of Ravana is prepared and burnt in open ground. In earlier periods this was a day of seemolangan i.e.

crossing our country borders and entering other countries to gain victory.⁸ One more interesting story in this connection is that - the demon Mahishasura troubled all the people. At that God adopted the form of Ashtabhuja goddess. He / She fought with Mahishasura from first of Ashwin to ninth day of Ashwin. He / She killed Mahishasura on the tenth day. So, it is called Vijaya-Dashami.⁹ In the puranas¹⁰ there is an interesting legend about the origin of this festival.

Religious Rituals and Customs :

When the tenth day begins rather late (Aparanahakala) it is customary to worship a horse or an elephant or some royal emblems or weapons or musical instruments. Then people should go to the north east and worship the tree of shame there. They should also worship the goddess Aparajita (the goddess who cannot be defeated) there and return. The king should worship Dikpal (Gods of different directions) and Vastu-devata (goddess of house). Then he should destroy the statues of his enemies with his weapons. He should cross the borders of his own kingdom, while returning he should bring back the leaves of shame or Apata, some soil and Akshata in a procession. His wives should perform Aarati and should spend the day gaily. He should have grand, delicious dishes with his friends and relatives. On the tenth eleventh or fifteenth day one should start

bathing early in the morning i.e. Kartika-snan. Kartika - snan means to take bath in the very early dawn either at river or at the well or at a holy place. This bath washes off all our sins - this is the order of the Dharm - Shastra.¹¹

RULES OF RITUALS:

i) The Worship of Aparajita and Shamee :

It has been stated that in any life power, strength are the great resources. Due to strength, power alone victory can be achieved and there would be no defeat. In short, the goal in every person's life is to achieve success. And success is only achieved when a person is not defeated or obstructed by any trouble or calamity. When a person becomes defeated he becomes dullest. One who is not defeated, achieves success on one day or the other. But a person who is defeated or becomes helpless, such a person never succeeds in life. So Aparajita-worship has been strongly recommended on the day of Vijaya-Dashami. In order to avoid defeat or helplessness or idleness. The name of the goddess Aparajita is just befitting. Aparajita means that cannot be defeated. However Vijaya or Aparajita both means the same.

In the same way meaning of shamee is 'shamya-nayanayarishtani'. This means a thing which pacifies, cools

down or prevents troubles, calamities. (Refer to ' vishto shami', 30 hymns and the definition given in Nirukta). And it is universally accepted that unless an until evils are prevented no success can be achieved. So, it is worthwhile to worship shamee.

There is one more reason why shamee should be worshipped. Shamee is regarded as fire-possessing - plant (Agni-garbha) Kalidas in his Raghuvansha 3-9 has said, -

' Shamibhivabhyantaralin Pawakam '

Mallinath also says, ' Shamigarbhadagni janayasi' satapathashruti also proves the same thing that fire is the fore most thing among those who destroy evil elements. So in order to destroy evil Omens, evil things fire-bearing shamee is good. Its worship is worthwhile for those who expect not to be defeated.

ii) Why the Worship of Weapons :

It has already been told that in Bharat all things have been classified under three heads. The three forms are -

- a) Physical things.
- b) Metaphysical things.
- c) Spiritual things.

According to this classification the Metaphysical form of no defeat is Aparajita plant or shamee. And its worship has been prescribed.

Yo Adhyatmiko - asau purushah so - asvivadhidaivikah
(Shri Mad Bhagawat) This means the person who is Adhyatmika is also adhidaivika. This also proves that there is no difference between Adhyatmika and Adhidaivika. The physical means in weapon or vehicle. And the base of Adhyatmika or Adhidaivika is the material things. So the worship of weapons or vehicles is made. But the real worship includes not formal worship but its proper use. So, today in free India on this day it is desirable to hold exhibitions of weapons and vehicles.

iii) Seemolanghan :

Mahabharata prescribes some rules for Brahmins and kshatriyas. The kshatriyas who are afraid of wars or do not oppose the opposition are just like mice, which only stay in the holes. The snakes eat them up. In the same way Brahmins, who do not travel or do not make propaganda are eaten up (swallowed) by the earth. This means even though such Brahmins and Kshatriyas are living they are as good as dead.

The obviously suggests that Kshatriyas should always be war-minded. They should always be of war-mentality. They must show their bravery, at least once in a year and that is on Vijaya-Dashami. They must cross their borders, must fight some battles. And should not lose their war-like spirit. This was in a way training for war

and victory. But the custom of varnashrama disappeared and with it the spirit of victory also vanished.¹²

Customs :

On the Ghatside, there is in some places a display of handling war-weapons. The favourite wrestling bouts, technically known as ' phads ' are not missed. Just as the katakari shall miss no opportunity of dancing, so the inhabitants of Ghat shall not miss an occasion for wrestling. In Konkan, however we do not come across any such activities on this day though the people are equally skillful in and are fond of the display of handling war-weapons.¹³

In some parts there is tradition of oblation of a he buffalo or he-sheep before the goddess. Many societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals are trying to stop this violence. But their success is negligible people think that if such an animal is killed and buried on the border of the village there comes no disease in that town or village.¹⁴

Under the influence of Hindu society many tribal groups celebrate Dusserah festival by sacrificing a fowl, a goat or a pig to the local goddess.¹⁵

In modern days offering of gold has become impossible. So people only offer the leaves of trees. In some places there is custom of killing goats and he-buffalos. But this tradition is diminishing day by day.

At present in many towns and states people hold gatherings on this day. In state there are stately assemblies and darabars and great, worthy persons are suitably rewarded. There is also a graceful procession of the king riding on elephant. The procession is worth looking at people from distant places gather to see the processions. In the days of peshawas the grace of the day was beyond any description.¹⁶

Festival about Agriculture :

Dassara appears to be mainly an agricultural festival. In the Rigvedas - (Mandal 4, Sukta 57) there is prayer of god Kshetrapati (Means god of farms) that is 1 / Just as faithful friends helps, that Kshetrapati (Lord of Lands) would help us. and with his help we can will that kind of mealth which would be useful to cows and horses. Let us hope that, that Kshetrapati would be mercifiul towards us.

4 / Oh Kshetrapati, let the bulls work happily. Let people work with energy and let the anchor move on suiftly. Let the work

go on lightly. And let happiness be granted. Your work with your whip in that way.

6 / Oh most fortunate seeta, we pray thee. Because you favour with us, with great fortune. You would fulfil our ambitions. The goddess Aparajita worshipped on the tenth day as per the order of shastra is fundamentally seeta - the wife of Kshetrapati devata. In due course of time the importance of bravery grew more and the importance allied goddesses of power increased. So, this goddess of prosperity come to be regarded as Aparajita. It was but natural that, in this country tools relating to agriculture, persons relating to farming and deeds involved in agriculture were all valued the most. In those days people believed that prosperity in crops depended mainly upon the sweet will of god. So people even the king and all tried their level best to secure the blessings of that almighty. People regarded corn as wealth or Laxmi and therefor did their utmost to protect it from enemy. No sooner was the rainy season was over than the king with his subjects, went up to the borders of the country and brought the bags of corn in grand procession. So Dassara is another form of this harvest festiva. In fact Dassara began somewhat two or thousand years back but in due course it changed its form. Even then its utility and age-long-popularity will be revealed clearly.

The festival of Dassara is not only an agricultural but also valorous one. The farmer, as if, adopts (Militarism/Valour) and princely luster in one and the same spirit. Farmer means Kshetrapati i.e. Kshatriya. He serves his motherland for the whole year. It is but obvious that he would come forth for its protection. He is constantly in touch with rivers, streams, hills and mountains. He makes ready his horses, bull and many other animals. He feeds and nourishes many of his assistants and co-workers. He even feeds the society at large. If it be so, then why should he not adopt militarism and princely nobility in him ? It is not at all wonder if he adopts them. Farmer is spiritually a king and a king is virtually a farmer.

This being the fact, the agricultural festival of Dassara became the festival of valour and bravery. There is historical harmony also for that. The main duty of kshatriyas is to protect the country. For that purpose a true kshatriya forecasts the future danger from the neighbouring enemy and rushes into his (enemy's) country by crossing his own borders. He does so of his own accord. This is a wise warfare because a battle should always be fought in enemy's country and not in our own. There is state manship and valour both combined.¹⁸

Purpose and Message of Festival :

In olden days there was a proverb. It said, ' farming is the best, commerce is better and service is the worst'. This showed that, there was great respect for farming. But after a lapse of century or so we left that farming to ignorant to idle and to bad conditioned people. And then we began to the worst i.e. service. People other than Indians worshipped Saraswati and Seeta and made them pleased. With their blessings they are prospering in respect of grain and wealth. The general condition of the farmers is being improved day by day and so the poverty in their lands is being destroyed. They are belssed by the goddess Laxmi, but we, on the other hand are feeling happy to become narrow minded. We denot feel any regard for the productive business. We simply waste our days by crying over dogmas like kaliyuga etc. Where as foreign people are worshipping labour and hard work which are the means of their prosperity. We, also, are after untouchability, dangerous customs, personal and social jelousy, differences of opinion, high and low social status, poverty and many other social evils. We have made ourselves prisoners behind the fortification walls of these social evils. When we would step out of these walls and we would cross the borders of these social sin and then only we would win the real gold instead of these symbolic leaves of Apata and shamee. That would be the Dassara

in the real sense of the term. To cross the borders means stepping towards prosperity. If we have real respect for this day which had come into existence due to the foresight of ancient social thinkers, if we have an earnest desire for prosperity, then everyone of us must labour hard to achieve the blessings of the great goddess viz. Saraswati and Seeta.¹⁹

Social Significance :

With independence and the disappearance of the princes from the Indian political scene, these ancient pageants are dying out and Durgotsava is becoming more democratic than regal, but is still held of great importance by the displaced rulers.²⁰

From the foregoing accounts of the major Hindu festivals it is evident that festivals play an important role in the socio-religious life of the Indians. They are not only the occasion of rejoicing and fun but also strong unifying force binding the whole country into a cultural unit. The secret of a often quoted remark that no civilization anywhere in the world has been continuous as that of India lies in the Indians faithful adherence to the socio-religious institutions like - pilgrimage, fasts and festivals.²¹

Vijaya Dashami is important from many points of view on this day we must banish old thoughts and prejudice and we must banish

old thoughts and prejudices and we must accept new beneficial thoughts. This is seemolanghan about thoughts. In the same way there must be seemolanghan in respect of evil, social, traditions. This is a good day for following good social traditions. We must forget differences about caste, religion, sect and should go beyond them. We must kill the germs of these various diseases of differences and diversing tendencies. And we must create harmony, love and brother hood among our people. Besides this there is one more importance to this festival. We must visit not only our relatives but also those whom we newly know or whom we donot know.²² The Apata leaves then exchanged among friends and relations with good wishes for the forthcoming year.²³ This will generate an affection and will bring about unity and organization in our society. This must be emphatically stressed upon the minds of our people.²⁴

The social significance of the festival is manifested in the all round joy and spirit of the togetherness among the people. It is occasion for a family reunion. Especially the Vijaya-Dashami festival is a day for meeting and greeting brothers and relatives, friends and even foes. It is also believed to be the most auspicious day for patching up quarrels and differences.²⁵

There is urgent need to attack poverty. It is great necessity to cross the borders of poverty by doing the hard efforts

in industrialization like wise the borders of ignorance, weakness, idleness should be encroached upon.²⁶ We must face evil deeds, rapes, murders, kidnapping and many other tuypes of injustice. Such a good work must be done on co-operative basis and everyone must participate in it is far as possible. All public function must aim at the well being of man. Such deeds should never be performed in which only selfish purpose is served and others are hurted.²⁷

A New Turn :

In Bombay however Navaratri seems to have lost its original meaning. In fact, it has become a source of entertainment for the young, who find no other avenues of freedom. The traditional music which accompanied the garbha dance has now given way to a more westernized from of beat music. The dance itself has lost its grace and what remains now is a disco variety - the dandiya and it is now called.²⁸

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Details 9



Debut 1.



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