

FESTIVAL REVIEW

DUSSEHRA DIWALI VERSUS VIJYADASHMI AND DEEPDAN UTSAVA

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Dashahra and Diwali are two of the Hindu festivals in India, while during the same period, the Buddhists celebrate Vijayadashmi and Deepdan-utsava respectively on the same days. The Brahminist scholars claim that on the day of Dussehra, Rama, one of their Avatars, had assassinated the King Ravana who had abducted his wife Sita. As per the legend, Shrupnakha, the sister of King Ravana had made offer of marriage to Ram and Laxman. In an ultimate response, the duo cut her nose, ears and the breasts. In retaliation, the King took away Sita and kept her in 'safe custody' in Ashokavan. They claim that on the day of Dussehra the 'evil' Ravana was killed by the 'good' Ram.

I make no comments as to who was good or evil. I leave it to the prudence of the wise readers. The Hindus also claim that after 20 days of Ravana's killing, the trio returned to Ayodhya after completing the punishment of 14 years in exile. Hence the people of Ayodhya lit lamps to express their joy. I have been a student of Law and also a lay disciple of the Buddha. Both of them command that nothing should be accepted as truth unless and until reliable evidence is produced in support of the claim. All courts of the world act upon this principle. Hence let us examine the evidence available.

Probing the Brahministic/Hindu claim

They have one epic namely Ramayana written by Sage Valmiki. It is generally believed and accepted that Ramayana is the first book on Ram-Ravana. Balkanda contains the full episode on the imposition of the 14 year exile on Ram. Sumantra (an all in one: Minister, driver, cook, servant) of Dashrath vouched: it is the pleasant month of Chaitra and that Bharat too is out of Ayodhya so it is appropriate time to do coronation of Ram. Dashrath readily accepted the proposal. When preparations were in full swing, Kakeyi Bharat's mother and third wife of Dashrath came to know of their secret plan.

Rama was fully aware of the fact that he was not legal heir to the throne as his father had married Kakeyi on the pre-condition that only a son born out of her womb would occupy the throne. Naturally Kakeyi got furious over this conspiracy of Dashrath and Rama to deprive Bharat of his legitimate right. Hence she demanded a punishment of 14 years in exile for Rama. The very next day Rama left the palace.

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The Balkanda has no mention of the day of Chaitra on which Rama went into exile. However Yudhkanda says that Rama came back on sixth day of the month. Here it is appropriate to be reminded that Bharat, son of Kakeyi and legitimate heir to the throne, had vowed to end his life, if Rama delayed his return even by a single day. Hence analysing these facts, one could draw that Rama went into exile on the sixth day of Chaitra and returned the same day after 14 years. As per the story Rama killed King Ravana 20 days ahead of his return. If we deduct 20 days from sixth day of Chaitra, it comes to sixteenth day of Phalguna month.

The months of Phalgun and Chaitra always corresponds to the period of February to April, whereas Dussehra and Diwali are always celebrated in the months of Ashwin and Kartik i.e. September and October. Moreover sixteenth day of the lunar month is always a day after *amavasya* (no moon night) whereas Dussehra is always celebrated on the tenth day. In no way the next day after *amavasya* could be the tenth day of the month. Even in Georgian calendar the tenth day can never happen on the sixteenth day the month. Thus the events of exile, assassination and return occurred in the months of March April only. Is it not the largest fraud made to believe the entire Hindus that Dussehra and Diwali held in September October are connected with murder of King Ravana and thereafter return of Rama in March April? Sadly all Brahminists right from the scholars like Radhakrishnan to roadside fortune teller conspire to make fool of the Hindus! Thus the Brahminic festival of Dussehra is baseless, bogus and fraud with the public.

So far the claim of burning lamps on the return of Rama is concerned; the Yudhkanda contains the episode of Rama's return to Ayodhya. Nowhere does it mention, even the slightest enthusiasm among the public for the return of Rama. Not a single person went to receive the trio, what to talk of burning of lamps in joy! Ultimately Shtrughan (Rama's youngest half brother) had to issue decree that the Minister should carry Brahmins and the Ganikas (prostitutes) to receive the trio.

Not only the Yudhkanda, but also the whole of the Ramayana does not contain a single occasion, say birth marriage etc., when public ever lit a single lamp to commemorate the event related to Rama. It appears the custom of burning of lamps to express joy was not a part of Aryan life. The burning of lamps for his return is simply a concocted claim! Perhaps it will be most appropriate to echo one of the dialogues of an ad: *No Uloobanaying!* (Don't make fool of us).

At some places like Bengal, the people worship 'Goddess of Power' (Durga, Chandi, Kali, Chamunda, Vaishnoetc) on the day of Dussehra as they claim/ believe that on this day their goddess assassinated Mahishasur or Rakatbeej or such other Asuras. One story says that whenever drops of Rakatbeej's blood touched the earth, anew soldier grew up from each droplet. Hence one of the goddesses drank whole of the blood from his severed neck before even a single drop could ooze out! Hence at some places the devotees (*shaakat*) build cut-

outs of their goddesses sipping blood from the severed neck as we sip juice through a straw.

So far as this event is concerned none claims that Dussehra got started due to such heinous sipping of blood by their Devis. All Hindus relate it with the assassination of Ravana. Ambedkar (1987) commented, it is strange that the Brahmins sidelined their male gods and brought forth their female counterparts to fight against the Asuras. Another strange point is that the Brahmins have three main Gods; Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv but they coined stories that these goddesses are married to Shiv only who is a Shudra god. He found it a riddle as to why did Brahmins do so. I think the Brahmins have done so with an ulterior motive that the Shudras should get a message that the killers of their heroes have been female of their god. Hence they should accept the murders as legitimate godly action and should not raise any voice of protest against the heinous murders. Undoubtedly they succeeded in their designs.

So far as calling these women as 'Goddess' is concerned, Guru Granth Sahib (GGS) gives the most appropriate answer. It says *Shaakat ki uhpind payan, hamari drishti pade trikhdayan* meaning she is body and soul of the shaakat (devotee of goddess of power) but in our view she is a bloody witch. The cutouts of the blood sipping Devis displayed in Puja-pandals draws back to the words in GGS. It is otherwise very shocking that the so-called peace-loving Hindus celebrate the murders or blood sipping as their festivals! According to Balkanda the murder of the King Ravana was planned much before the birth of Sita. Abduction or no abduction, King Ravana was going to be finished by all means. Rama was produced for this specific purpose.

Historical Facts

The above said is what is mentioned in the mythology. Now let's examine what history points out about these festivals. The first book available on history of India is 'Indika' written by Megasthenese, the Greek ambassador in the court of Chandergupt Maurya. He writes that Brahmins came to India under the leadership of Divodas about two centuries before the Buddha. They settled near Indicus (a hilly area in Afghanistan). They came to the plains but could not bear the heat. Hence they settled their colonies in the foothills of the Himalayas. A few of them reached up to Kapilvastu also.

Alexander conquered this area and appointed Saluecus as Governor of the area. When Chandergupt Maurya defeated Saluecus, he married his daughter to the Emperor and donated this Brahmin colony as dowry to the couple. Thereafter, the Brahmins entered India with impunity. The result was astounding one. Buddha encountered only two or three yags in his 45 years Dhamma-prachar stint but after the dowry event Brahmins and their yags spread so fast that Ashoka had to issue a decree specifically banning slaughters in the yags! As far as festivals are concerned, Megasthenese wrote that Beas was considered as sacred river and people used to take holy dip on the full moon day. He also

mentioned Ganga and Jamuna rivers but did not refer them as sacred or as a pilgrimage. The Buddhist and Jain monks were given respect in the society. The only reference as a religious personality is that of Buddha. In his account, no reference to Dussehra, Diwali, Vijayadashmi or Deepdan otsava could be found. Hence one could assume that no such festival had started by that time.

Next books available on Indian history are the travel records of the Buddhist monks of China who visited India between 399 CE to 695 CE. First came Fahiyen (399-414 CE) followed by Huen Tsang (629-645 CE) and Itsing (671-695 CE). They all visited every nook and corner of India but none mentioned any festival like Dussehra or Diwali. They did mention in detail the grand celebrations made on the tenth day of Ashwin and gifting of lamps to the Buddha Viharas (Bhikkus) by the general public. So it is evident that till 700 AD no Dussehra or Diwali had taken birth.

In 1000 CE Al-Baruni came, a real historian, who travelled throughout India and wrote at length on each and every habit of the Indians in his book *Kitab-ul-Hind*. He mentioned as many as 32 festivals which Indians used to celebrate. Surprisingly Dussehra does not find a place in the list. Diwali is mentioned but the reason is astonishing. People lit lamps on the night of *Amavasya* (no moon night) of Kartik (October/November) because on that day Emperor Bali escaped from the prison of the Devas. People lit lamps not only in their homes but also on the road-crossings so that the Emperor could see the path to his palace or a house of any of his subject. Thus by that time, the burning of the lamps had not been connected with the arrival of Rama. And burning of effigies of King Ravana and his family members too had not started by that time.

It will not be out of context to mention here that King Bali was great grandson of King Harinyakashap and son of Buddhist Monk Virochan. The Buddhist literature mentions Virochan as an *Arhata* and great scholar of Dhamma. King Bali followed path of his sage father. Even today laity of India sings prayers on the day of Dipawali requesting King Bali to return to his empire and do justice to all. Thus till 1000 CE, burning of lamps on Diwali day had related with Buddhist tradition only.

About 500 years later came the Mughals. Babar wrote Babarnama. He made no mention of Dussehra or Diwali or Vijayadashmi. Yes, he did mention a tradition performed by females on the evening of *Kartikamavasya* (no moon night of October/November). The women used to light lamps under the pipal (banyan) tree. Needless to mention here what relation pipal tree in Buddhist tradition is sacred. Babar's grandson Akbar wrote Akbarnama. He mentioned in detail of playing Holi but made no mention of Dussehra or Diwali or Vijayadashmi. He enjoyed Holi not for religious fervour but just to enjoy company of the gopis.

Only when Tulsi wrote Ramcharit in Hindi dialect, Rama gained popularity among the masses. Just like Ambedkar gained popularity after Kanshiram founded Dalit Soshit Samaj Sangarsh Samiti (DS4) and Bahujan Samaj Party

(BSP) in 1980s. History bears evidence to the fact that the Brahmins of Varanasi did not allow Tulsi to sit on the banks of the Ganga river and write his poem in Hindi. He had to seek asylum in a Mosque and write Ramcharit there. Even food too was provided by the Muslims to him during his stay there. In 1625 one Meghbhagat, a disciple of Tulsi wrote the drama which is now played as Ramlila. In that drama, the event of burning of lamps on Rama's return was inserted. Sadly, in the initial times, the actors were sacrificed in the name of the deity whose role one performed. However later on, this custom was discontinued.

When the European scholars came to India, they were amazed to see strange customs and festivals of India. They wrote extensively with minute details of the rituals performed in celebrating these festivals. In a book authored in 1854, there is a mention of Ramlila, however, no reference to the effigies burning (Dussehra) could be found. The book written in 1904, for the first time, mentioned burning of effigies fitted with crackers. Interestingly, Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) was founded in 1925. Hence there is every possibility that those who started burning of effigies had founded the RSS. Thus the Dussehra is just a century old festival. The Diwali has no link, whatsoever; with the story of Rama of the so-called Dwapar age. The dates mentioned in Ramayana very explicitly establish this fact.

Buddhist Claim

Let us now examine the evidence available in Buddhist literature.

Vijayadashmi

Ambedkar, the most brilliant scholar of Buddhism, regained refuge in Buddhism on the day of Vijayadashmi. While explaining why he chose this particular day, he stated that on this day of Vijayadashmi, Emperor Ashoka had formally adopted Buddhism and solemnly affirmed to spread message of humanity as taught by Buddha. Hence he chose the same auspicious day for adopting path shown by Buddha. If we go by the history, the Edicts engraved by the Emperor on rocks and pillars, are evidence to the fact that the festival of Vijayadashmi was initiated by him. Rock Edict states (also referred by Megasthenese) earlier the Kings used to go out for hunting or on luxurious tours. Now I discontinue that practice. Henceforth, I shall proceed on Dhamma journey.

Every fourth year, after celebrating the anniversary of his adopting the Buddhism, he would set out for Dhamma journey. He would come out of the palace to meet general public and Bhikkus and listen to their experiences. Gradually this custom became an annual function and spread to the entire Buddhist world. When Fahian started his journey to the land of Buddha in 399 CE, he found this festival being celebrated with great enthusiasm in Khotan itself, a famous province of China. Right from Khotan to Madras and from Sindh

to Bengal, he found this festival being celebrated on the day of Vijayadashmi – the tenth day of Ashwin month.

While giving details of the festival he writes almost in every big city a *rath yatra*¹ is performed. At different places the festival continued for different period ranging from 3 days to 30 days. In Khotan it was celebrated for a week, in Patliputra for 3 days and in Mathura, Jalandhar etc. places for a month.

The grandest function was held at Palimbuddha (in Sanskrit Patliputra, now Patna). It was known as Capital of Dhamma like Vatican. The Chinese Bhikkus wrote that on the eighth day of Ashwin month the procession used to start from the Vihara where the Emperor had been solemnised in Dhamma. The main chariot had a 30-40 feet wide square base. A 70 feet high and seven storey Vihara of the bamboos was built over it. At the top storey three idols were placed, one each representing the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. The idol of the Sangha was placed in the shape of a Boddhistava as it was endeavour of every Bhikku to achieve the stage of Boddhistava. The idol of the Dhamma was placed in the shape of a woman because it is the mother who initiates the child on the path of morality. Many more chariots were also built by different Viharas.

On the start of the function, the Emperor, Ministers and family members would reach the Deeksha Vihara. They would take off their crowns and jewelry outside the Vihara and enter it like a common man. They would draw the chariot out of the Vihara and hand it over to the public. Thereafter, the public would pull it to the main Vihara, singing and dancing on the streets. For three days people would assemble in the main Vihara where Bhikkus would arrive from all over the world. Discussions used to be held and the Bhikkus would answer the queries. After three days on the tenth day of the month, the chariot was pulled back to the Deeksha Vihara. This chariot was called the Vimana. This practice was in vogue even during seventh century when other visited India.

Deepdan-utsava

The Bhikkus used to stay at main centres/cities till the next *Amavasya* (no moon night) after Vijayadashmi. They used to share their experiences. Next day after the *Amavasya*, the *Varshavasa*² was deemed to be over. That day the Bhikkus would formally leave the place of their stay till then and start wandering again. On that day people used to donate lamps in the Viharas and it was called Deepdan-utsava meaning Festival of Gifting Lamps.

Chinese monks wrote that the lamps donated by the laity were such that their flame would not put out by the wind or rain. It would appear to be a false tall claim as no glass covers were used in those days. But we Indians have always

¹ Rath yatra is a procession in which devotees place the idols of their Heroes on chariots and pull them through the streets.

² In India during rainy season, all rivers would flood. During Buddha's times there were no metalled roads. Buddha therefore instructed all the Bhikkus not to move for alms during the rains, rather stay at one Vihara. This four months period is called Varshavasa.

been expert in making wonderful objects. See the Ashoka-pillar built of pure iron, standing opposite the Qutub Minar in Delhi. Rust has failed to touch it though it has been standing for 2300 years in rain, sun and dust. So the people of India designed a lamp that would keep burning even in rain and wind. It is called 'Ghudla'. Even today, it is sold with the earthen lamps at the time of Diwali/Deepdan-utsava. Surprisingly, the Brahminists spared Ghudla from tagging any of their fables. Ghudla is made in the shape of a Satupa with one side opening. A burning diya/lamp can placed there safe from wind and water.

As per ancient Buddhist literature, Emperor Ashoka too gifted such lamps to the Bhikkus/Viharas. Though the Brahminical Social Order (BSO) completely uprooted Buddhism from India, the custom of gifting lamps continued in two ways. First one is in the shape of Ghudla. Even today people do purchase a Ghudla. As no Vihara exist, they gift it to the female children. A notable point is female represented Dhamma in rath yattras. Almost in every house the lighting begins after burning of lamps in the Ghudla. First of all people pay reverence before it and then lit other lamps. This is the same practice as our Buddhist forefathers used to observe in ancient times.

The second custom is visible in the shape of burning of lamps in ruins or open ground. When Sankara razed Buddhist Viharas in 800 CE, people used to go there, arrange a few bricks and lit lamps over them. Today people go out in open ground, collect a few bricks, arrange them in the shape of a wall/room and lit lamps over them. They sit there silently. The long time of 12 centuries has erased from their memories the actual purpose of lighting the lamps. Earlier they used to pray for restoration of the Vihara, now they pray for their own house. But till date they follow their ancestor's custom. Thus the festivals of Vijayadashmi and Deepdan-Utsava are purely Buddhist festivals. As the BSOs concocted story of Vishnu taking avatar as Buddha, so have they framed stories about these festivals also. This way the Brahmins succeeded to put their stamp over the Buddhist festivals.

Before closing my submissions, I would like to make another revelation about the traitors who distorted name of the Buddhist Emperor. The full name of the Emperor is Devaam-nampiya Piyadassi Ashoka. Throughout the whole world it is the rule of grammar that proper name *cannot* be translated. But while translating his Edicts, the stupid scholars translated, also the name of the Emperor. First they sanskritised it as Devanaam Priya Priyadarshi Ashok, then they translated it as Beloved of gods Ashok.

Thus the traitors fixed their stamp of gods over the most rational King of the world. He is the only ruler who could dare uproot the religious place where the priests of his own religion have made concocted claim about the Buddha. There is one Sankasiya Vihara. The monks of the Vihara spread a concocted story that the Buddha descended from the heaven through a stair. On reaching the Earth, the stair submerged in the ground of the Vihara and a few steps were visible. The rationalist Emperor did not like such lies. So he ordered to dig out the full

stair. Only a few more steps were found. And the rogues translate his name as Beloved of gods? Whereas the Dhamma he followed does not believe in any gods. Being a Buddhist, such acts of cheating hurt me to the core of my heart. I have no malice against anyone but when traitors put their stamp over my forefather, it is my pious obligation, as a true son, to put an end to the stamp itself.

References

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