



## BEAUTIFICATION OF MYSORE DASARA FESTIVAL

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### ABSTRACT-

This is one of the very special festivals and has been continued right from the period of Vijayanagara kings. This was a state festival. Many foreign tourists have explained the importance of this festival through their writings. This was continued by Vijayanagara kings and it was performed with grandeur which made this festival to establish a permanent place in the history of Mysore province. The grandness of this festival was responsible for the spread of its fame in other countries. On the first day of Ashwayuja Shuddha Padyami, which is called as Navaratri Padyami, an Urn was installed, and poojas was performed till the end of Navaratri festival. After 1610, this festival was started by Wodeyar dynasty by Wodeyar kings. Shakti Devate (Goddess of Power) was the adorable goddess of the Wodeyar family. Devi means a wonderful movable and immovable energy which provides power to the entire world. Based on myths, fictions and other sources available, it is believed that originally Yadu Dynasty started with the kindness of God and blessings of Goddess Chamundeshwari. Hence Chamundeshwari is the Devi (household deity) of Wodeyar family and it is believed that without her blessings, there is no place to them.

**KEYWORDS-** Festival, Dasara.

### INTRODUCTION-

In Rigveda's 10<sup>th</sup> Mandala's Devi Sooktha (Aambhruni Sooktha), it is said that Devi is responsible for all transactions. According to Devi Mahathme, it said that she stays in the hearts of every living being, she encroaches upon the entire universe, she inspires all the living thing to transaction, she controls the entire universe in the form of Time. She is also bringing changes in the time by making sun and the moon to be visible in day and night, she regulates day, week, fortnight, month, half year and years also. In this way the Goddess who inspires every life in this universe is worshipped in different names such as Durga, Saraswathi, Rajarajeshwari, Chinmayi, Chamundi, Mahalakshmi and many others. The energy so hidden in the nature has assumed different courses worshipped in different names. Inspiring Goddess Devi is worshipped during Navaratri festival periods.<sup>42</sup> In this way the feast of worshipping Goddess Devi on all the days throughout the 9 days of the period was known as Navaratri

festival. Mysore Wodeyar dynasty had given prominence to this festival and during their regime, conduct of Navaratri festivities was considered as one of the important cultural programmes.

If the importance of Navaratri festival is considered, it is stated in Markandeya Purana as one of the supreme festivals during autumn season which is observed once in year which is observed throughout 9 days during which high mass is offered to Goddess Devi. Autumn season starts with the beginning of Ashwayuja month of Hindu calendar and it continues up to 9<sup>th</sup> day, which is called as Navami. In order to eradicate bad energies, Gods are born to the luminosity of Hari, Hara and the God of fire Agni, the three gods. Such gods possess different types of weapons to kill demons. Goddess Devi goes to sleep on the full moon day of Ashaada month. In order to wake up Devi, she was worshipped in different names for 9 days of Navaratri and for this reason Navaratri festival was observed. Such worships for 9 days are as follows:

1. Ashwayuja Padyami (First Day): Worship Maha Kaali who killed Madhu Kaitabha demons
2. Bidige (Second day) : Worship Durga who killed Mahisha.
3. Thadige (Third day): Worship Chamundi who killed demons Chanda and Munda
4. Chauthi (Fourth day): Worship Kali who killed Raktha Beejaasura
5. Panchami (Fifth day): Worship Maha Mayi Durgi who took birth as the daughter of Nanda and indicated the death of Kamsa
6. Shashti (Sixth day): Worship Rakthadanthi who killed fearful demons.
7. Sapthami (Seventh day): Worship Shakaambari Devi who destroys famine
8. Ashtami (Eighth day): Worship Durga Devi who killed demon Durga
9. Navami (Ninth day): Worship Bhraamari Devi who killed demon Aruna.

In this way, performance of Devi pooja for continuous 9 days was called as Navaratri festival. Different ways followed for worshipping Devi has been stated in Devi Mahathmya, Devi Purana and others. It is stated that performing Devi Pooja during Navaratri festival days ensure holy fruits equal to 100 Yajnas. The person who worships the Goddess will be free from sorrow throughout his life. It is stated that Devi will be present in the form of Night during nights and Maheshwara will be in the form of Day. It is further stated that Devi should be worshipped for all the 9 days during night time only.<sup>43</sup> By doing like this Devi will fulfill all our wishes. On Sapthami, Ashtami, Navami and Dashami (7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>) days, Goddess Saraswati must be invited for worshipping. By doing like this ignorance and darkness in our life will be eradicated by Sharada and she will bless us with good knowledge. All the poojas offered to these Devis will remove all bad things in our life. In this way, different Goddesses of Power were worshipped during Navaratri festival days in Mysore palace which was unique and special in nature in the administration of.

In addition to Navaratri, the Goddess of the World (Jaganmathe) was worshipped on the tenth day to conclude the Navaratri festivities. Since the poojas were offered for all the ten days during Navaratri days, it is also called Dashahara in colloquial language. On the ninth day (Navami), all the weapons are worshipped. Later, worshipping of dolls (Gombe pooja), pooja for Banni Tree or Shami Vriksha and bringing its leaves to the house and worshipping it, keeping such leaves on the urns established earlier, decorated dolls and then finally they are dismissed. This brings the end of Navaratri festival.

Removing the leaves of the branches of Shami Vriksha and distributing among all on the tenth day is the speciality of Navaratri festival. The importance of Shami tree is that it banishes all our bad deeds. It destroys enemies. It is stated that Lord Sri Rama worshipped Shami tree on Vijayadashami (10<sup>th</sup> day) before waging war on Ravana. After worshipping the tree, he distributed the leaves of Shami tree

to all and thus he killed Ravana and won the battle. Pandavas went into exile into forests. In the 13<sup>th</sup> year, they completed incognito (Ajnaathavaasa) in the palace of Virata Raja.<sup>44</sup> Pandavas had hidden their weapons in this tree. It is stated that during this period, Kauravas wanted a war with Virata Raja and under the leadership of Uttara Kumara, the son of Virata Raja, war was fought and when they were about to be defeated by Kauravas, Arjuna came to the rescue of Uttara Kumara and defeated Kauravas. It is also stated that the incognito of Pandavas was completed on the tenth day of Dasara that is on Vijaya Dashami day. Since Arjuna defeated Kauravas, that day is called as Vijaya Dashami day. As token of victory, Shami tree is worshipped on that day. As the legend says, kings go to the pavilion where Shami trees are grown and worship them. Later they cut the branch of the tree and distribute the leaves among many persons. This has been in practice in Wodeyar dynasty. Even today, it is observed as a tradition and that a carnival of Gods of all the temples will be taken to Shami pavilion and cut the branch of Shami tree by the sword, offer its leaves to the God and then accept the leaves as boon blessed by God and it will be worn by all the persons. In this manner, the Shami tree continued to retain its sanctity.<sup>45</sup>

The carnival of Navaratri is a very important religious transition to the kings of Mysore received from Vijayanagar kings. It is a religious festival and was observed for the first time by the kings of Vijayanagar. They had given a new dimension to this festival. Much importance was given to this festival during the regime of Krishnadevaraya, Aliya Ramaraya and Thirumalaraya. When Shrirangaraya, son of Thirumalaraya came to Srirangapattana, as a representative of Vijayanagar king, the throne was brought to Srirangapattana. Srirangaraya vacated the rule in 1610 due to serious illness and he handed over the state and the throne to Mysore king and returned to Malangi along with his wife. Later, the capital city was transferred from Mysore to Srirangapattana by Wodeyar. Grand Navaratri celebrations made by Vijayanagar kings were started by Raja Wodeyar with the crowning ceremony. In this way Srirangapattana became the second place for throne and observing Navaratri festivities.<sup>46</sup> After the death of Tipu in 1799, Britishers handed over the rule of Mysore state to Wodeyar and Krishnaraja Wodeyar III became the King. Again the capital city was transferred from Srirangapattana to Mysore. Along with it, even the throne also came back to Mysore. Along with that, even observing Navaratri carnival became the special feature of Mysore. In this manner, Navaratri carnival was celebrated in Vijayanagara, Srirangapattana and Mysore during Wodeyars rule.

In the history of Vijayanagara Dynasty, Hindu culture was at its peak in South India during the period of Sri Krishnadevaraya. Many foreigners visited Vijayanagara during his period. They were astonished to see the celebrations of Navaratri carnival. Navaratri festival was celebrated in a grand manner during the period of Vijayanagar kings. But the grandeur, broadness, military strength and diversity that was present in Vijayanagar dynasty did not exist before 1610 in Srirangapattana which was under the control of Vijayanagar. But in 1610, Srirangapattana came into Wodeyars control and from that period onwards Navaratri carnival took a new look. Later when the administrative capital was shifted to Mysore, the Navaratri carnival which was celebrated in a simple manner due to certain circumstances, obtained grandeur and with similar grandness and diversity, the festival was started during the rule of Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV. The glamorous look of the palace was enhanced with new illumination of the building, which looked like the grand look of Indra's palace in heaven. Hence Navaratri carnival was admired by all the people throughout the state.<sup>47</sup>

The celebration of Navaratri carnival at Srirangapattana by the King of Mysore, Raja Wodeyar, is explained in a book called "Vamshavali", written by Maharaja. Accordingly, after finishing the morning routine work on Ashwayuja Shuddha Padyami, (the first day of Ashwayuja month), they were saluting the Goddess Chamundeshwari which is installed inside the premises of the palace. Fully ornamented used to bow his head to the throne and then climb the throne. Later, with Royal respect and with all

grandeur of royal possession, a procession was held till the evening and different programmes were conducted. On the day of Mahanavami (9<sup>th</sup> day of Navaratri) also, along with daily morning routine works, sandhya vandana was also performed by the king. Later pooja, procession, carnival with royal respects, and such other programmes were held in a grand manner with great discipline. Howdah (ambari), pooja for Shami tree and other rituals were performed. Then he would felicitate different great personalities and foreigners and through this he was conducting the programme in a grand manner. In this manner, Navaratri carnival was celebrated by Raja Wodeyars in Srirangapattana.

Navaratri carnival was celebrated regularly until the administration of Wodeyar was ignored and was taken directly under the control of Hyder Ali and Tippu. During the period of Hyder Ali and Tippu, Wodeyars were celebrating this as a routine and symbolic festival. Later during Krishnaraja Wodeyar III's (1799-1868) period, Navaratri festival came alive.<sup>48</sup> During Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, new palace was constructed and until then the festival was celebrated very simply and traditionally. After 1910, the grandness of Navaratri festival increased.

### **Navaratri Carnival in Mysore City**

After 1910, Navaratri festival was celebrated in a grand manner in Mysore city . Curtains were down for simple and traditional performances. On Bhadrapada Bahula Dashami, Shanthi Karma performances will be done. After all oblations (Aahuti) to the throne, its installation will be done by offering poojas and other rituals through palace astrologers and priests. Later Homas will be performed. Then holy cleansing water (Punyaaha) is performed. Then Dasara carnival begins on Ashwayuja Shukla Padyami (the 1<sup>st</sup> day) in the Darbar Hall in the presence of important personalities of the palace. Then king comes to the pavilion of Chamundi which is outside the palace, and by standing only, he submits the holy cleansing to Shri Chamundeshwari, Shri Parakala Mutt and Sringeri Mutt. After the traditional poojas, installation of urns and other programmes, he climbs the throne at the auspicious moment and other programmes will be held as per the traditions.<sup>49</sup> Later he felicitates those who come towards the durbar hall with procession of elephants, horses and cows and also holy orchestra. He accepts Veelya (betel leaves), then he goes around the throne, accepts the salutes and then he disperses from that place. Along with these offerings, other religious observations will also be followed. Later in the evening, musical orchestra, wrestling with Jattis, military parade and such other entertainment programmes will be held which gives a grand look to the Dasara Carnival at Mysore.

Performing Saraswati Pooja, then Kalaratri Pooja in relation with the killing of Mahishasura, and Durgashtami poojas during Dasara festival are very important. Performance of Ayudha Pooja on Maha Navami day is another special pooja during Dasara. During Dasara festival, a European Durbar will be held with Europeans themselves as special invitees. Important British officers, rich persons and European guests will be felicitated. At this time, some exhibitions, orchestras and different types of background music scores will also be played. Speciality of this Durbar is that it is neither having any traditional background nor religious programme.<sup>50</sup> Since Mysore province was the sheltered province of the British, an opportunity was given to them to participate in these activities and it was inevitable to send a message so that the British were not ignored.

In this regard, Navaratri festival was celebrated very grandly from the beginning to the end. It was purely a religious performance. Each and every activity performed during this period was a fight against adharma or injustice. It is a fight against false by truth. It is a means through which darkness is eliminated and light is lit up. It shows the winning by platonic (saatvika) against immoral wants and desires. Maharaja worships the throne as a common man. After wearing Holy Tear (Divya Kankana), to the common man, he climbs the throne as a representative of the God. At this juncture, people believe that he will be surrounded by the glow of cleanliness, platonic (saatvikate) and invisible godliness. In this

manner, Navaratri carnival begins at the sun rise on Ashwayuja Shukla Padyami and ends on the sun set on Ashwayuja Shukla Dashami in a grand manner. Different types of entertainment programmes, exhibitions and other activities will be held throughout the city of Mysore. The entire city was flooded with happiness and enthusiasm. Generosity of Maharaja in felicitation, courteous behaviour of the officers, selfless service of common people, friendship, illumination of palace to look like Indra's palace at heaven, beautification of city, innumerable mementoes, gifts, tributes were winning the hearts of every guest.<sup>51</sup> After Vijaya Dashami, each guest was given a fare-well by Maharaja and the entire carnival was an unforgettable experience to each of the guest. They were anxious when this festival would come back. In this way, Mysore Wodeyars were responsible for the grand celebrations of Dasara carnival which bought a great fame and pride to Mysore throughout the country. Due to all these factors, Mysore city was called as the cultural city of the country.

### CONCLUSION-

Mysore is not just a city. It has a historical heritage. We identify many cities while identifying the heritage of history of Karnataka. Mysore has a special place in this. In one meaning, the history of this city is a condensed history of Mysore state. It includes culture landscape, architecture, education, administration, trade and all other factors which played a decisive role in constructing its history.

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