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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

CELEBRATION TO DASARA (NADA HABBA) WITH FOLK MEDIA

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Abstract:

Folk media is a genuine means of communication and a true carrier of culture amongst various people. It inspires people to perceive the message or information more effectively. Folk media serves as a means of achieving the ultimate reality.

CULTURE, TO a considerable extent, is preserved and promoted by tradition. Tradition is the handing down of beliefs, experiences and customs from generation to generation especially in oral form or by a process of traditional performance and communication. All over the world, the vehicle that has passed on tradition and customs and which has been contributing to national culture for generations is folklore. Folklore is comprised of oral folklore such as folksongs and ballads, customary folklores such as folkdances and material folklore such as crafts, arts and costumes.

KEY WORDS:

Folk Media, Dasara, Culture, Folk Dance.

INTRODUCTION

ORIGIN OF DASARA :

Navrathri or Dasara is a national festival consecrated to the worship of all- pervading energy or Sakti of the universe. It symbolises the triumph of good over evil. About the ritual of this puja, the Markandeya Purana says, “It is the inscrutable power of Mahamaya which knits human souls together by bond of love and brings about attachment between each other. She is the creative energy of universe. She is the cause of its preservation and destruction. Go, worship and propitiate her.” In Bengal the mother is revered as Kali while in Mysore she is known as Chamundi, which is one of her many titles, as the tutelary goddess of Mysore royal dynasty. Dasara is being observed in Karnataka from the days of Purana and nowhere else this ancient ritual system is being retained with as little modifications consonance with the changed complexion of the country, or the festival being observed so elaborately as in Mysore. It is not a mere Hindu festival or religious ceremony. It is a cultural holiday in which every citizen is interested and participates with joy.

Although it is difficult to trace the various vicissitudes of the form and observance of the festival that have passed since the days of our Puranas, one could find a remarkable similarity in its observance during the days of great Vijayanagar Kingdom in 15th century and in Mysore City. Going through the picturesque details given by Italian and Portuguese travelers who visited the magnificent Hindu Kingdom of Vijayanagar, one would find in the observance of Mysore a replica of the festivities observed during the days of Vijayanagar rulers.

Title :CELEBRATION TO DASARA (NADA HABBA) WITH FOLK MEDIA Source:Golden Research Thoughts [2231-5063] BASAPPA Y. BANGARI yr:2012 vol:1 iss:7

A GLANCE OVER DASARA:

Celebrated to mark the defeat of Ravana, the King of Lanka by Lord Rama, Dussehra symbolizes the triumph of good over evil. The word Dussehra comes from the word 'Dus' meaning 'ten' and 'Hara' meaning 'annihilated'- perhaps, in reference to the ten heads of the evil Ravana. Although in some cities like Mysore - the capital of the erstwhile kingdom of Mysore and a renowned centre of the arts - the Dussehra celebrations have grown into an internationally renowned pageant, this ten- day festival is celebrated with equal fervour, pomp and gaiety in most parts of Karnataka.

In Mysore, Dussehra commemorates another legend the slaying of the buffalo demon Mahishasura by the goddess Durga. In fact, Mysore probably derives its name from 'Mahishasurana Ooru', meaning the town of Mahishasura.

It is believed that during one of the wars between demons on the one hand and gods on the other, the demon Mahishasura overpowered the gods. On seeing this, goddess Durga is said to have incarnated herself as the fierce Chamundeshwari and killed Mahishasura atop Chamundi Hill near Mysore.

Ever since then, the Mysore royal family has worshipped Chamundeshwari as the palace deity; and the 10 day-long Dassara festivities in Mysore bring back the regal splendor and grandeur of a bygone era. For nine full days, the tranquil city comes alive with music concerts, dance programmes, sports competitions and other cultural events.

On the tenth day, called Vijayadashami (or the day of victory), the celebrations culminate in the grand Dassara procession. The procession begins at the cynosure of festivities, the illuminated Mysore Palace. This parade includes brightly attired soldiers in traditional uniforms, the cavalry, caparisoned elephants and dancers on floats accompanied by evocative Indian melodies.

The Palace Guard and Mysore Lancers march past as graceful folk-dancers twirl and swirl between the floats. A specially chosen elephant adorned with golden anklets, bell and chains carries the city's patron goddess, Chamundeshwari in a majestic 'howdah'. The extravagant celebration comes to an end with a torchlight parade as fireworks light up the night sky.

In Coorg, the Ramlila - an enactment of the life of Lord Rama, is held during the nine days preceding Dussehra. On the tenth day, larger than life effigies of Ravana, his son, Meghnath and brother, Kumbhakarna are set alight at sunset accompanied with the bursting of crackers. The highlight of the Dussehra festivities in Madikeri, Coorg is a colourful procession of beautifully lit temple cars vying for the coveted prize of best-decorated car.

WORLD FAMOUS DASARA DURBAR :

It is worth recalling now what the much- travelled Portuguese traveller, Domingo Paes, who visited Hampi, the capital of Vijayanagar (about 1520) had to say about the vision of the people while observing the dasara festivities. The Chronicle gives us the grand panoramic description of Navarathri, the spectacle of the grand durbar held by the king in the palace, the wrestling matches, dancing of women, torch light displays in the evening, mock battles on horse backs, throwing of rockets of different sorts, of five young maids of the palace elegantly dressed, with gold vessels containing little lamps in them, and elephants trained to make obeisance to them all adding gaiety to the occasion. 'The King leaves his palace riding on the horse back, clothed in the many rich white clothes with two umbrellas of state, all gilded and covered with crimson velvet, and with jewels and adornments which they keep for purpose of wearing at such times; he whoever wears such jewels can understand the sort of things so great a lord would wear. “Then to see the grandeur of the nobles and men of rank, I cannot possibly describe it all, nor I should be believed if I tried to do so; then to see the horses and the armour that they wear you would see them so covered with metal plates that I have no words to express what I saw, and some hid from me the sight of others, and to try and tell of all I saw is hopeless, for I went along with my head so often turned from one side to other that I was almost falling backwards off my horse with my senses lost. The cost of it is not all so much to be wondered at, as there is so much of money in the land and the chiefs are so wealthy”

There went in front of the King many elephants with their coverings and ornaments, the king had before him some twenty horses fully caparisoned and saddled, with embroideries of gold and precious stones, that showed off well the grandeur and state of their Lord. Close to the King went a cage such as is seen at Lisbon on the day of Corpode Dias festival, and it was gilded and very large; it seemed to be made of copper or silver, it was canted by sixteen men, eight an each side, besides others who took their turn, and in it is carried the idol. Thus accompanied, the King passed along gazing at his soldiers, who gave great shouts and cries and struck their shields; the horses neighed, the elephants screamed, so that it seemed as if the city would be overturned, the hills and valleys and the all ground trembled with the discharges of arms and muskets, and to see bombs and fire missiles over the plains, this was indeed wonderful. Truly, it seemed as if

the whole world were collected there."

Describing the return journey of the King reviewing the troops he says, "Then to see those who were on the hills and slopes and the descent of them with their shouts and beating of shields and shaking of arrows and bows that were without count. Truly, I was in a dream."

Although, more than 400 years have rolled by since the destruction was wrought on this magnificent kingdom of Hampi, one could still see the great ruined square platform, the striking object of wonder and admiration popularly known as the Dasara dibba or Mahanavami dibba where the nine-day festivities used to be conducted.

This traditions passed on from Vijayangar to Srirangapatna and there to the Wodeyar family of Mysore. Such is the unique association of these festivities in Mysore with those in the days of rulers of Vijayanagar.

With the changed political and administrative complexion of the country, the princely order having been replaced with popular Government, the festivities are being happily continued, of course with minor modifications.

If Shri Krishnadeva Raya, the illustrious Vijayanagar King (1509-30) were to come and view the festivities in Mysore city now, he will feel elated to see the links with the past in the observance of the festivities are not sapped and they are observed elaborately, with the participation of the general public and the State conducting the festivities.

CHAMUNDI – GODDESS OF FOLKLORE:

Goddess Chamundeshwari is considered as the presiding deity of Mysore and its Royal family. According to one tradition, the city derived its name from Mahisha mandala, the city of the buffalo demon Mahishasura, who was vanquished by Goddess Durga and established herself on the Hill in the form of Chamundi. The Chamundi Hill at Mysore is 3,489 ft. above sea level and, provides a picturesque backdrop to the city. Formerly the Hill was called Mahabala or Marbala Thirtha, and the most ancient temple in the city is the temple of Mahabaleshwara on the Hill. The Mahabala temple built during the Ganga times was expanded later by the Hoysala kings. An inscription dated 1128 A.D. records donations by the Hoysala king Vishnuvardhana to Mahabala Thirtha.

There are beautiful images of Saptamatrikas, Nataraja, Parvathi, Bhairava and Mahishamardini - all of Hoysala workmanship and images of Vishnu and Brahma of the Ganga times. The frontal mantapa of the temple was built during the 17th century. The Chamundeshwari temple on the Hill gained importance when the goddess became the family deity of the Wodeyar dynasty. A story has it that Bola Chamaraja (1572-76) who on a visit to this temple was struck by a lightening and though his life was saved, he lost his top hair and became 'bola' or bald. Since then, the royal family took the deity seriously and Chamundi is described as the family deity. Chamundi is called Chamayi in folklore and is described as the consort of Nanjaiah or Nanjundeswara of Nanjangud. The thousand years old Chamundi temple was renovated and expanded by Mysore rulers. Krishnaraja Wodeyar III added the seven storeyed Dravidian stylistic gopuram to it. Also Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan of Srirangapatna paid respects to this temple. It is believed that Sultan is said to have been donated silver vessels to the temple.

The annual festival of the temple is celebrated soon after Dasara and car festival takes place on Ashvayuja Poornima (full-moon day in October). In the night the Teppotsava is held in the nearby tank called Devi-Kola. Now tourists can reach up the Hill by a road, but formerly one had to climb 1000 steps laid by Dodda Devaraja Wodeyar I (1662- 72). He also created a huge monolithic Nandi image half way to the Hill. The image is 16ft. tall and 25ft in length, beautifully wrought with fine decorative ornaments. Atop the Hill is the Rajendra Vilas Palace from where one can get a beautiful aerial view of Mysore City. The 12 ft tall cement statue of Mahishasura is another attraction of this place. The Chamundi Hill also provides shelter for a variety of flora and fauna.

DASARA: A GLORIOUS TRADITION :

Dasara was a state festival during the vijayanagar rule. The Wodeyar rulers of Mysore continued the colourful tradition. Interestingly enough, anything in Mysore is Chamundi oriented. The climax of the Dasara festival is the last day of Vijayadashimi, an auspicious occasion for the Hindus to embark on major ventures. Mysore the fragrant land of Jasmines is known for its exotic sandalwood articles and silk. This city of palaces and gardens is also known all over the world for its colourful Dasara celebrations. Mysore is appropriately called, the "City of nine nights". This festival reminds us the triumph of good over evil. During the ten days of this festival, goddess Chamundeshwari is worshipped along with goddess Saraswathi. For ten days, Mysore becomes a fairyland of fireworks, lights, processions richly caparisoned

elephants On the final day an idol of Chamundeshwari is taken in procession seated in a golden howdah on an exquisitely decorated and painted elephant. In the words of R.K. Narayan, well-known novelist who hails from Mysore. “The festive temperament is more marked in Mysore than anywhere else.” The Govemment of Karnataka revives the festivities year after year bringing back old glory and charm of this royal city. Mysore gets its name from Mahishasura, the demon king of Hindu Mythology who once lived here and was vanquished in battle by goddess Chamundeshwari. When we think of Chamundeshwari, naturally we do think of the Chamundi Hill where the goddess killed the buffalo demon Mahishasura. There is a magnificent temple dedicated to the goddess, and a giant clay model of the demon greet the visitor. R.K. Narayan narrating his experience says, 'Chamundi Hill offered not only a temple to visit but also uncharted slopes, boulders, creeks and unsuspected retreats'. Locating a cave temple with pillared platforms, secret chambers, and underground cellars, the entire structure roofed over by a huge rock, at the southern base of Chamundi hill. It took to visiting this cave regularly not caring for the rumour that the place might be harbouring reptiles and cheetahs in its cellars”.

The Chamundi hills, 1095mtrs high, overlooks Mysore city. A fine road (13kms) leads to the top of the hill but those young at heart can make use of the 1000 steps built by Dodda Devaraja in the seventeenth century. Half-way up is a large five meter Nandi, the holy bull on which Shiva rides - carved out of single piece of rock, looking out over the plains.

Goddess Chamundeshwari has several names like Shakti, Kali, Durga and Mahishamardini (destroyer of a buffalo demon). According to W.J. Wilkins, she is depicted in pictures and images, 'as a golden coloured woman with a gentle and beautiful countenance. She has ten arms, in one hand she holds a spear, with which she is piercing the giant Mahisha, with one of her left hands she holds the tail of a serpent, with another the hair of the giant whose breast the snake is biting other hands are filled with various weapons. Her lion leans against her right leg and the giant against the left. Dasara was a state festival during the Vijayanagara rule. The Wodeyer rulers of Mysore continued the colourful tradition. The climax of the Dasara festival is the last day of Vijayadashimi, an auspicious occasion for the Hindus to embark on major ventures. On Ayudha Pooja day every weapon or manifestation of power is worshipped. Shining automobiles bedecked with banana shoots and garlands of flowers hang along the gaily decorated elephants. There is colourful cavalry, smartly turned out soldiers in ceremonial uniforms, blaring bands and floors depicting the history and culture of the State, move in procession - the variegated Karnataka arts and history bringing alive. At night the city is ablaze with lights, glitters as if millions of stars had come to earth to watch the celebrations and lakhs of people join in the illuminations and festivities turn, Mysore into Carnival city. Till 1970, the Maharaja sitting on the golden howdah weighing 80 kg. led the procession. Now his place has been taken over by an idol of goddess Chamundeshwari. But the originating point continues to be the palace itself.

CONCLUSION:

Folk media are very effective in communicating messages on important national issues, largely because it needs a small troupe, the costs in instruments, transport and manpower are moderate or low, and the outreach is wide, particularly through performances in hats (market places in rural areas) and bazaars. Patriotic forces during the anti-British movement used to organise such groups to motivate the people in favour of swadeshi movement. Simultaneously, during the Second World War the British Indian government constituted a song publicity unit to mobilise public opinion in their favour. The governments of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh later strengthened the unit. India has created an organisation named the Sangeet-Natak Academy (the Academy of music and drama), the main responsibility of which is to perform motivational programmes throughout the country. In Bangladesh there are branches of the department of mass communication and Shilpakala (fine arts) Academy and Shishu (children) Academy offices in all the districts headquarters, where cultural shows with specific messages are organised locally.

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