

...AND THEN THERE WAS 'Light' !!

DEEPAVALI - Lighting a single '*diya*' of my own Spiritual awareness!

The Festival of Lights, incidentally seen in every culture, religion worldwide, is the fight against evil forces and creation of peace and happiness. Diwali conjures up a number of things in the mind's eye – sweets, new clothes, account books, Goddess Lakshmi, fireworks etc. and in Maharashtra, a special 5-day ceremony ensures a perfect celebration. While the physical rituals are necessary, a deeper understanding of the spiritual meaning guarantees that we continue to respect and 'live' our eternal teachings.

Brahma Kumari Rajyogini Dadi Prakashmaniji, gave a very intriguing comment during one of her interviews – she said, "The coming of the new world *Satyuga* (heaven) is as certain as death." Her conviction and faith are praise-worthy! In our world where a child knows suffering better than the love of their parents, there are personalities like Dadiji whose eyes only see memories of those past days of perfection.

No other festival unites Indians around the world, as does *Deepavali*. A single *diya* holds infinite beauty and hope. While we celebrate these auspicious days with the same grandeur seen in the past, the pure beliefs held by our ancestors were more enlightening. *Deepavali* or *Diwali* is a celebration of victory over evil and the coming of a New Year. But if we probe further, what is this darkness we want to remove? In reality, evil or darkness does not have an *astitva* or identity of their own – they exist due to a lack of goodness or light. Knowledge, power and all that is pure, are very real characteristics since they are part of us, perhaps dormant yet existing.

We begin with Dhanamyodashi, where families worship Dhanvantari, a special ayurvedic herb said to cure a person of all illnesses. As science too proves, about 98% of all diseases are psychosomatic, meaning the problem lies in the mind. With time and circumstances, human beings have lost a great degree of their inner power, thus making them vulnerable to attacks from the vices (lust, anger, greed, attachment, ego). The weak mind has affected the body too and when we take the medicine of spiritual knowledge, prescribed by the Ultimate Doctor God, we can cure both mind and body.
Let us be 'light' !

Our second day is celebrated as Narkchaturdashi. Spiritual Knowledge about Self-realisation, God-realisation etc. can only be taught by the Supreme. Diwali, the tradition of lighting diyas, actually describes how the Supreme Light comes to re-ignite our awareness of being points of energy or souls. This knowledge is

used to overcome the foreign elements of vices. In memorial of these efforts, we have the story of Narkasur or destroying of evil.

The third day is spent in invoking Goddess Lakshmi. Today, we have unfortunately lowered the status of Lakshmi Devi to that of a banker. In reality, her name stems from the word, 'Laksh' meaning 'the goal', implying that she stands for the ultimate goal of perfection that human beings can reach. The 'wealth' that she has to offer is of Divine Knowledge and Virtues; a Divine character alone can attain prosperity (material and otherwise) and peace. Homes are cleaned thoroughly in her honour and invocation, but we forget that a clean mind and intellect are the easiest ways to attract her.

Moving to the fourth day of Balipratipada, we see success at every step or *padh/kadam* when we maintain connection with the Supreme Soul. In spirituality, this is symbolic for yoga or union. When I visualise myself to be a Divine point of light, and then direct my intellect and thoughts to the Supreme Parent, I experience God's power and love. This *shakti* helps me fight weaknesses and inculcate virtues.

The beautiful process of gaining knowledge, overcoming vices, cleaning the intellect and remembering the Supreme, leads us to appreciate the fifth day, *Bhaiyadooj* or *Bhaibeej*. The unique knowledge of the 'soul' as revealed by the Brahma Kumaris frees us from stereotypes and prejudices based on religion, caste, colour, gender and age. We then see every individual as being a child of God and so part of my spiritual family - the ultimate truth.

Sweets (maintaining loving relationships),
new clothes (discarding everything old),
new account books (settling karmic accounts),
fireworks (burning evil off)
and other interesting rituals prepare us spiritually for the New Year or Age.
The darkness of ignorance cannot remain;
Our deep desire to create a world of happiness will become a reality.

The key lies in lighting a single 'diya' - my own spiritual awareness – and then...
'Jyot se Jyot Jagaate chaol, Prem ki Ganga Bahaate chaloo...'
Light others' light with your light, and allow the Ganges of Love to flow...

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