dīpāvali

An Historical Perspective and study with reference to Indian Literature and Epigraphy

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We have just celebrated **dīpāvaḷi**, the festival of lights. I am sure many of us are still enjoying all those sweets. This festival has been celebrated for a very long time by the followers of dharma in India. Apart from the Hindus, this also includes Jains, Sikhs and some Buddhists. The significance of dīpāvaḷi is such that it is associated with many of our gods- śrī rāma (his return to ayōdhya on this day from exile), kṛṣṇa (his slaying of narakāsura on the caturdaśī), lakṣmī (birth and wedding with viṣṇu), vāmana & bali, and mahāvīra (attained nirvāṇa), among others.

The festival is celebrated as the victory of good over evil, dharma over adharma, light over darkness. It is also associated with Yakṣa-s (hence yakṣarātri as one of the names of the festival) and pitṛ (manes), with the lighting of lamps and bursting of firecrackers believed to light the way back for the pitṛ as they return after the mahālaya pitṛ pakṣa. This need not be taken literally but as a symbol of our remembrance of our ancestors and our acknowledgement of their presence and journey. Over the last two millennia, particularly the last 1500 years, we see references to the festival dotted across literature and inscriptions. These give many details of the different ways it has been celebrated over this period.

Let us take a look at the evidence available. As there is much to say and show, I will present this in several parts.

The Earliest Literary Evidence–till the 8th Century CE

The earliest clear reference to the festival is in the **kāmasūtra** from the **2nd-3rd C CE** (called **yakṣarātri**). It is noteworthy that the **jayamaṅgalā** commentary (by Yaśodhara Indrapāda) on the Kāmasūtra (13th century CE.) elaborates on yakṣarātri (dīpāvali) and goes on to note the gathering of yakṣa-s, the full moon of āśvayuja, and gambling during that time. These are current beliefs and practices to this day in many parts of India.

ಸಮಸ್ಯಾಃ ಕ್ರೀಡಾ ಆಹ—
ಯಕ್ಷರಾತ್ರಿಃ । ಕೌಮುದೀಜಾಗರಃ । ಸುವಸಂತಕಃ ॥
ಜಯಮಙ್ಗಳಾ => ಯಕ್ಷರಾತ್ರಿರಿತಿ । ಸುಖರಾತ್ರಿಃ । ಯಕ್ಷಾಣಾಂ ತತ್ರ ಸಂನಿಧಾನಾತ್ । ತತ್ರ ಪ್ರಾಯಶೋ ಲೋಕಸ್ಯ ದ್ಯೂತಕ್ರೀಡಾ । ಕೌಮುದೀಜಾಗರ ಇತಿ । ಆಶ್ವಯುಜ್ಯಾಂ ಹಿ ಪೌರ್ಣಮಾಸ್ಯಾಂ ಕೌಮುದ್ಯಾ ಜ್ಯೋತ್ಸ್ನಾಯಾಃ ಪ್ರಕರ್ಷೇಣ ಪ್ರವೃತ್ತೇಃ । ತತ್ರ ದೋಲಾದ್ಯೂತಪ್ರಾಯಾಃ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಃ । ಸುವಸನ್ತಕ ಇತಿ । ಸುವಸನ್ತೋ ಮದನೋತ್ಸವಃ । ತತ್ರ ನೃತ್ಯಗೀತವಾದ್ಯಪ್ರಾಯಾಃ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಃ । ಏತಾ ಮಾಹಿಮಾನ್ಯಃ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಃ ।

samasyāḥ krīḍā āha—
yakṣarātriḥ । kaumudījāgaraḥ । suvasantakaḥ ॥
Jayamaṅgalā=> *yakṣarātririti । sukharātriḥ । yakṣāṇāṁ tatra saṁnidhānāt । tatra prāyaśō lōkasya dyūtakrīḍā । kaumudījāgara iti । āśvayujyāṁ hi paurṇamāsyāṁ kaumudyā jyōtsnāyāḥ prakārṣēṇa pravṛttēḥ । tatra dōlādyūtaprāyāḥ krīḍāḥ । suvasantaka iti । suvasantō madanōtsavaḥ । tatra nṛtyagītavādyaprāyāḥ krīḍāḥ । ētā māhimānyaḥ krīḍāḥ ।*

We then see the Festival of lamps noted in **nāgānanda by harṣha (1st half of the 7th C CE)** as **dīpapratipadutsava**. This occurs as part of a conversation in Act 4 of the drama where the characters discuss the custom of giving gifts. Today, during dīpāvali, we still light lamps and exchange gifts.

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ದೇವ, ದೀಪಪ್ರತಿಪದೋತ್ಸವೇ ಯದ್ ಮಲಯವತ್ಯಾಃ ಸ್ವಾಮಿಪತೇಶ್ಚ ಕಿಂಚಿದುಪಕಾರಃ ಕರ್ತವ್ಯಃ, ತಸ್ಮಾದ್ ಆಗತ್ಯ ವಿಚಾರ್ಯತಾಂ ಕಿಯಂತಂ ಪ್ರಯಚ್ಛಾಮ ಇತಿ।

dēva, ***dīpapratipadōtsavē*** *yad malayavatyāḥ svāmipatēśca kiñcid upakāraḥ kartavyaḥ, tasmād āgatya vicāryatāṁ kiyantaṁ prayacchāma iti.*

In his Sanskrit poetic work **harivaṃśapurāṇa, Jinasena I (783 CE)** has versified his belief that **dīpālikā** arose in the world to mark the nirvāṇa of jinēndra (Mahavira) when the gods lit up lamps to illuminate pavanagiri. Here we see echoes of the popular Hindu belief that the lighting of lamps during dīpāvali is to guide departing jīātman/ spirits. The verse is in the vaṃśasthā metre.

ತತಸ್ತು ಲೋಕಃ ಪ್ರತಿವರ್ಷಮಾದರಾತ್-
ಪ್ರಸಿದ್ಧದೀಪಾಲಿಕಯಾತ್ರ ಭಾರತೇ।
ಸಮುದ್ಯತಃ ಪೂಜಯಿತುಂ ಜಿನೇಶ್ವರಂ
ಜಿನೇಂದ್ರನಿರ್ವಾಣವಿಭೂತಿಭಕ್ತಿಭಾಕ್ ॥*66:21*॥

tatastu lōkaḥ prativarṣamādarāt
*prasiddha****dīpālika****yātrā bhāratē*।
samudyataḥ pūjayituṁ jinēśvaraṁ
jinēndranirvāṇavibhūtibhaktibhāk ॥*66:21*॥

The **nīlamata purāṇa** is a work that emerged from Kashmira between **7th and 8th Century CE**. dīpāvali is referred to as **sukhasuptikā** here. Some of practices associated with the festival as described in this work are- worshiping lakṣmī; lighting numerous lamps in temples, streets, cremation grounds, shops and homes; dressing in new clothes; feasting with family, friends and the community; gambling; gifting new clothes to each other. These verses could have been written today and would still hold good! There is hardly any difference between then and now in the way the festival is celebrated, particularly with respect to customs in the northern part of bhārata. The verses given below has some errors in them. I have given them as found in the source text.

ರಾತ್ರೌ ದೀಪಶ್ಚ ದಾತವ್ಯೋ ಮಾಸಮೇಕಂ ಬಹಿರ್ಗೃಹಾತ್
ಯಾವತ್ಕಾರ್ತ್ತಿಕಮಾಸಸ್ಯ ಪೌರ್ಣಮಾಸೀ ದ್ವಿಜೋತ್ತಮ ॥೬೦॥

rātrau ***dīpa****śca dātavyō māsamēkaṃ bahirgṛhāt*
yāvat kārtikamāsasya paurṇamāsī dvijōttama ||*60*||

ಏವಾ ತು ಕೌಮುದೀ ನಾಮ ತಿಥಿಃ ಕಾರ್ಯಾ ಶಿವಪ್ರದಾ ।
ತತಃ ಪಕ್ಷೇ ವ್ಯತೀತೇ ತು ಕರ್ತ್ತವ್ಯಾ ಸುಖಸುಪ್ತಿಕಾ ॥೪೧೦॥

ēvā tu kaumudī nāma tithiḥ kāryā śivapradā |
tataḥ pakṣē vyatītē tu kartavyā ***sukhasuptikā*** ||*410*||

ಪಞ್ಚದಶ್ಯಾಂ ಯಥಾ ವಿಪ್ರ ತಥಾ ಮೇ ಗದತಃ ಶೃಣು ।
ತಸ್ಯಾಂ ದಿವಾಂ ನ ಭೋಕ್ತವ್ಯಂ ಬಾಲಾತುರಜನಂ ವಿನಾ ॥೪೧೧॥

pañcadaśyāṃ yathā vipra tathā mē gadataḥ śṛṇu |
tasyāṃ divāṃ na bhōktavyaṃ bālāturajanaṃ vinā ||*411*||

ಸೂರ್ಯೇ ತ್ವಸ್ತಮನುಪ್ರಾಪ್ತೇ ಪೂಜಯಿತ್ವಾ ಕರೀಷಿಣೀಮ್ ।
ದೀಪವೃಕ್ಷಾಸ್ತತೋ ದೇಯಾ ದೇವತಾಯತನೇಷು ॥೪೧೨॥

sūryē tvastamanuprāptē pūjayitvā karīṣiṇīm |
dīpavṛkṣā*statō dēyā dēvatāyatanēṣu* ||*412*||

ಚತುಷ್ಪಥಶ್ಮಶಾನೇಷು ನದೀಪರ್ವತವೇಶ್ಮಸು ।
ವೃಕ್ಷಮೂಲೇಷು ಗೋಷ್ಠೇಷು ವಂ ಚತ್ವರಶ್ವಾಪಣೇಷು ಚ ॥೪೧೩॥

catuṣpathaśmaśānēṣu nadīparvatavēśmasu |
vṛkṣamūlēṣu gōṣṭhēṣu vaṃ catvaraśvāpaṇēṣu ca ||*413*||

ವಸ್ತ್ರೈಶ್ಚೈವಾಪಣಾಃ ಸರ್ವೇ ಕರ್ತ್ತವ್ಯಾ ದ್ವಿಜ ಶೋಭಿತಾಃ ।
ದೀಪಮಾಲಾಪರಿಕ್ಷಿಪ್ತೇ ಪ್ರದೇಶೇ ತದನನ್ತರಮ್ ॥೪೧೪॥

vastraiścaivāpaṇāḥ sarvē kartavyā dvija śōbhitāḥ |
dīpamālā*parikṣiptē pradēśē tadanantaram* ||*414*||

ಸ್ವಲಂಕೃತೇನ ಭೋಕ್ತವ್ಯಂ ದ್ವಿಜೇನ್ದ್ರ ನವವಾಸಸಾ ।
ಸುಹೃದ್ಭಿರ್ಬಂಧುಭಿಃ ಸಾರ್ಧಂ ಬ್ರಾಹ್ಮಣೈಶ್ಚಾನುಯಾಯಿಭಿಃ ॥೪೧೫॥

svalaṅkṛtēna bhōktavyaṃ dvijēndra navavāsasā |
suhṛdbhirbandhubhiḥ sārdhaṃ brāhmaṇaiścānuyāyibhiḥ ||*415*||

ತತಃ ಪ್ರಾಪ್ತೇ ದ್ವಿತೀಯೋಹ್ನಿ ಸ್ವನುಲಿಪ್ತೈಃ ಸ್ವಲಂಕೃತೈಃ ।
ಕ್ರೀಡಿತವ್ಯಮ್ ತದಾ ದ್ಯೂತೈಃ ಶ್ರೋತವ್ಯಂ ಗೀತವಾದಿತಮ್ ॥೪೧೬॥

tataḥ prāptē dvitīyōhni svanuliptaiḥ svalaṅkṛtaiḥ |
krīḍitavyam tadā dyūtaiḥ śrōtavyaṃ gītavāditam ||*416*||

ವಿಶೇಷಯಚ್ಚ ಭೋಕ್ತವ್ಯಂ ಪೂರ್ವೋಯತೈಸ್ತತೈರ್ಜನೈಃ ಸಹ ।
ತಸ್ಮಿನ್ದ್ಯೂತೇ ಜಯೋ ಯಸ್ಯ ತಸ್ಯ ಸಂವತ್ಸರಃ ಶುಭಃ ॥೪೧೭॥

viśēṣayacca bhōktavyaṃ pūrvōyataistatairjanaiḥ saha |
tasmindyūtē jayō yasya tasya saṃvatsaraḥ śubhaḥ ||*417*||

ತಸ್ಯಾಂ ರಾತ್ರ್ಯಾಂ ತು ಕರ್ತವ್ಯಂ ಶಯ್ಯಾಸ್ಥಾನಂ ಸುಶೋಭಿತಮ್ ।
ಗನ್ಧೈರ್ವಸ್ತ್ರೈಸ್ತಥಾ ಧೂಪೈಃ ರತ್ನೈಶ್ಚೈವಾಭ್ಯಲಙ್ಕೃತಮ್ ॥೪೧೮॥

tasyāṃ rātryāṃ tu kartavyaṃ śayyāsthānaṃ suśōbhitam |
gandhairvastraistathā dhūpaiḥ ratnaiścaivābhyaḷaṅkṛtam ||*418*||

ದೀಪಮಾಲಾಪರಿಕ್ಷಿಪ್ತಂ ತಥಾ ಧೂಪೇನ ಧೂಪಿತಮ್ ।
ದಯಿತಾಭಿಶ್ಚಸಹಿತೈರ್ನೇಯಾ ಸಾ ಚ ನಿಶಾ ಭವೇತ್ ॥೪೧೯॥

dīpamālā*parikṣiptaṃ tathā dhūpēna dhūpitam* |
dayitābhiścāsahitairnēyā sā ca niśā bhavēt ||*419*||

ನವೈಶ್ಚ ವಸ್ತ್ರೈಃ ಪೂಜ್ಯಾಶ್ಚ ಸುಹೃತ್ಸಮ್ಬನ್ಧಿಬಾನ್ಧವಾಃ ।
ಬ್ರಾಹ್ಮಣಾ ಭೃತ್ಯವರ್ಗಾಶ್ಚ ಚನ್ದ್ರದೇವ ಯಥಾವಿಧಿ ॥೪೨೦॥

navaiśca vastraiḥ pūjyāśca suhṛtsambandhibāndhavāḥ |
brāhmaṇā bhṛtyavargāśca candradēva yathāvidhi ||*420*||

Further Literary Evidence– 8th Century to 10th Century CE

The **kāvyamīmāṃsā** by **rājaśekhara (9th C CE)** is a Sanskrit work written as a guide and encyclopaedia to poets. The 18th chapter deals with seasons and their associations with activities etc (much like kigo in haiku, the Japanese form of poetry). Herein, under the rainy season (varṣāḥ), one verse describes the festivals of **mahānavami** and **dīpālikā**. dīpāvali is marked by diverse entertainments and sports in front of visitors and kings. The practice of worshipping all weapons, and doing ārati to the caturaṅgabala (the four divisions of infantry, cavalry, elephants and charioteers) during mahānavami described here is very like today's practice of **ăyudhapūjā**.

ಮಹಾನವಮ್ಯಾಂ ನಿಖಿಲಾಸ್ತ್ರಪೂಜಾಃ	*mahānavamyāṃ nikhilāstrapūjāḥ*
ನೀರಾಜನಾ ವಾಜಿಭಟದ್ವಿಪಾನಾಂ ।	*nīrājanā vājibhaṭadvipānām*
ದೀಪಾಲಿಕಾಯಾಂ ವಿವಿಧಾ ವಿಲಾಸಾ	***dīpālikāyāṃ** vividhā vilāsā*
ಯಾತ್ರೋನ್ಮುಖೈರತ್ರ ನೃಪೈರ್ವಿಧೇಯಾಃ ॥	*yātrōnmukhairatra nṛpairvidhēyāḥ ॥*

Kannada's ādikavi **Pampa (c 940 CE)** notes the festival in his rendering of the mahābhārata- **vikramārjunavijayam**, popularly called **pampabhārata**. Here arjuna is cajoling his lover in the nāgalōka and saying to her that she should say something, anything at all and that even if she were to berate him, it would be like the celebration of **dīpāvaḷi** or **mahānavami** for him. (Men, take some notes!📝)

ಇನಿಯಂ ನೊಯ್ದುಮೊಡಂಬಡಂ ನುಡಿದೊಡೆಂದೆಂದಪ್ಪೊಡಂ ನಿನ್ನೊಳೆ-	*iniyaṁ noydumoḍambaḍaṁ nuḍidoḍendendappoḍaṁ*
ಳ್ಳನಿತುಂ ದೋಷಮನುಂಟುಮಾಡದಿರೆಯುಂ ಕಣ್ಪಿಂತೆ ಸಂದಪ್ಪುದೊಂ-|	*ninnoḷe ḷḷanituṁ dōṣamanuṇṭumāḍadireyuṁ kaṇpinte*
ದನೆ ಕೇಳ್ದೊಪಳೆ ಕೂರ್ಮೆಗೆಟ್ಟೆನಗೆ ನೀನೇನಾನುಮೊಂದೇವಮಂ	*sandappudoṁ| dane kēḷdōpaḷe kūrmegeṭṭenage nīnēnānu-*
ಮನದೊಳ್ ಮಾಡಿದೊಡಂದೆ ದೀವಳಿಗೆಯಂ ಮಾನಾಮಿಯಂ ಮಾಡೆನೇ ‖	*mondēvamaṁ manadoḷ māḍidoḍande **dīvaḷige**yaṁ*
	mānāmiyaṁ māḍenē ‖

The **skandapurāṇa** is a Sanskrit religious text of the Hindu dharma. It is the largest purāṇa with over 80 thousand verses, and has expanded over a period of several centuries. The second khaṇḍa known as vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa is from between the **8th and 10th centuries CE**. Within it, the **kārttikamāsamāhātmyam** (chapter 9) elaborates considerable detail regarding the legends associated with and the celebration of the festival of **dīpāvaḷi**. The verses 2:4:9:53 to 65 are noteworthy.

ಮದ್ರಾಜ್ಯೇ ಯೇ ದೀಪದಾನಂ ಭುವಿ ಕುರ್ವಂತಿ ಮಾನವಾಃ ॥	*madrājyē yē **dīpadānāṃ** bhuvi kurvanti mānavāḥ ‖*
ತೇಷಾಂ ಗೃಹೇ ತವ ಸ್ತ್ರೀಯಂ ಸದಾ ತಿಷ್ಠತು ಸುಸ್ಥಿರಾ ॥ ೫೪ ॥	*tēṣāṃ gṛhē tava strīyaṃ sadā tiṣṭhatu susthirā ‖ 54 ‖*
ಮಮ ರಾಜ್ಯೇ ಗೃಹೇ ಯೈಷಾಮಂಧಕಾರಃ ಪತಿಷ್ಯತಿ ॥	*mama rājyē gṛhē yaiṣāmandhakāraḥ patiṣyati ‖*
ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀಸಂತಾನಾಂಧಕಾರಃ ಸದಾ ಪತತು ತದ್ಗೃಹೇ ॥ ೫೫ ॥	*lakṣmīsaṃtānāndhakāraḥ sadā patatu tadgṛhē ‖ 55 ‖*
ಚತುರ್ದಶ್ಯಾಂ ಚ ಯೇ ದೀಪಾನ್ನರಕಾಯ ದದಂತಿ ಚ ॥	*caturdaśyāṃ ca yē **dīpā**nnarakāya dadanti ca ‖*
ತೇಷಾಂ ಪಿತೃಗಣಾಃ ಸರ್ವೇ ನರಕೇ ನ ವಸಂತಿ ಚ ॥ ೫೬ ॥	*tēṣāṃ pitṛgaṇāḥ sarvē narakē na vasaṃti ca ‖ 56 ‖*
ಬಲಿರಾಜ್ಯಂ ಸಮಾಸಾದ್ಯ ಯೈರ್ನ ದೀಪಾವಲಿಃ ಕೃತಾ ॥	***bali**rājyaṃ samāsādya yairna **dīpāvalī**ḥ kṛtā ‖*
ತೇಷಾಂ ಗೃಹೇ ಕಥಂ ದೀಪಾಃ ಪ್ರಜ್ವಲಿಷ್ಯಂತಿ ಕೇಶವ ॥ ೫೭ ॥	*tēṣāṃ gṛhē kathaṃ **dīpā**ḥ prajvaliṣyaṃti kēśava ‖ 57 ‖*
ಬಲಿರಾಜ್ಯೇ ತು ಯೇ ಲೋಕಾಃ ಶೋಕಾರನುತ್ಸಾಹಕಾರಿಣಃ ॥	***balirājyē** tu yē lōkāḥ śōkā'nutsāhakāriṇaḥ ‖*
ತೇಷಾಂ ಗೃಹೇ ಸದಾ ಶೋಕಃ ಪತೇದಿತಿ ನ ಸಂಶಯಃ ॥ ೫೮ ॥	*tēṣāṃ gṛhē sadā śōkaḥ patēditi na saṃśayaḥ ‖ 58 ‖*
ಚತುರ್ದಶೀತ್ರಯೇ ರಾಜ್ಯಂ ಬಲೇರಸ್ತ್ವಿತಿ ಯಾಚಯೇತ್ ॥	*caturdaśītrayē **rājyaṃ balē**rastviti yācayēt ‖*
ಪುರಾ ವಾಮನರೂಪೇಣ ಪ್ರಾರ್ಥಯಿತ್ವಾ ಧರಾಮಿಮಾಮ್ ॥	*purā **vāmana**rūpēṇa prārthayitvā dharāmimām ‖*
ದದಾವತಿಥಯೇಂದ್ರಾಯ ಬಲಿಂ ಪಾತಾಲವಾಸಿನಮ್ ॥ ೫೯ ॥	*adāvatithayēṃdrāya **bali**ṃ pātālavāsinam ‖ 59 ‖*
ದತ್ತಂ ದೈತ್ಯಪತೇರಿತ್ಥಂ ಹರಿಣಾ ತದ್ದಿನತ್ರಯಮ್ ॥	*dattaṃ daityapatērittha**ṃ** hariṇā taddinatrayam ‖*
ತಸ್ಮಾನ್ ಮಹೋತ್ಸವಂ ಚಾತ್ರ ಸರ್ವಥೈವ ಹಿ ಕಾರಯೇತ್ ॥ ೬೦ ॥	*asmānmahōtsavaṃ cātra sarvathaiva hi kārayēt ‖ 60 ‖*
ಮಹಾರಾತ್ರಿಃ ಸಮುತ್ಪನ್ನಾ ಚತುರ್ದಶ್ಯಾಂ ಮುನೀಶ್ವರಾಃ ॥	*mahārātriḥ samutpannā **caturdaśyāṃ** munīśvarāḥ ‖*
ಅತಸ್ತದುತ್ಸವಃ ಕಾರ್ಯಃ ಶಕ್ತಿಪೂಜಾಪರಾಯಣೈಃ ॥ ೬೧ ॥	*atastadutsavaḥ kāryaḥ śaktipūjāparāyaṇaiḥ ‖ 61 ‖*
ಬಲಿರಾಜ್ಯಂ ಸಮಾಸಾದ್ಯ ಯಕ್ಷಗಂಧರ್ವಕಿನ್ನರಾಃ ॥	***balirājyaṃ** samāsādya **yakṣa**gaṃdharvakinnarāḥ ‖*
ಔಷಧ್ಯಶ್ಚ ಪಿಶಾಚಾಶ್ಚ ಮಂತ್ರಾಶ್ಚ ಮಣಯಸ್ತಥಾ ॥ ೬೨ ॥	*auṣadhyaśca **piśācā**śca maṃtrāśca maṇayastathā ‖ 62 ‖*

ಸರ್ವ ಏವ ಪ್ರಹೃಷ್ಯಂತಿ ನೃತ್ಯಂತಿ ಚ ನಿಶಾಮುಖೇ ।।
ತತ್ತನ್ಮಂತ್ರಾಶ್ಚ ಸಿದ್ಧ್ಯಂತಿ ಬಲಿರಾಜ್ಯೇ ನ ಸಂಶಯಃ ।। ೬೩ ।।

sarva ēva praḥṛṣyaṃti nṛtyaṃti ca niśāmukhē ||
tattanmaṃtrāśca siddhyaṃti balirājyē na saṃśayaḥ || *63* ||

ಬಲಿರಾಜ್ಯಂ ಸಮಾಸಾದ್ಯ ಯಥಾ ಲೋಕಾಃ ಸುಹರ್ಷಿತಾಃ ।।
ತಥಾ ತದ್ದಿನಮಧ್ಯೇ ತು ಲೋಕಾಃ ಸ್ಯುರ್ಹರ್ಷಿತಾ ಭೃಶಮ್ ।। ೬೪ ।।

***balirājya**ṃ samāsādya yathā lōkāḥ suharṣitāḥ* ||
tathā taddinamadhyē tu lōkāḥ syurharṣitā bhṛśam || *64* ||

ತುಲಾಸಂಸ್ಥೇ ಸಹಸ್ರಾಂಶೌ ಪ್ರದೋಷೇ ಭೂತದರ್ಶಯೋಃ ।।
ಉಲ್ಕಾಹಸ್ತಾ ನರಾಃ ಕುರ್ಯುಃ ಪಿತೄಣಾಂ ಮಾರ್ಗದರ್ಶನಮ್ ।। ೬೫ ।।

tulāsaṃsthē sahasrāṃśau pradōṣē bhūtadarśayōḥ ||
ulkāhastā narāḥ kuryuḥ pitṝṇāṃ mārgadarśanam || *65* ||

ನರಕಸ್ಥಾಸ್ತು ಯೇ ಪ್ರೇತಾಸ್ತೇ ಮಾರ್ಗಂ ತು ವ್ರತಾತ್ಸದಾ ।।
ಪಶ್ಯಂತ್ಯೇವ ನ ಸಂದೇಹಃ ಕಾರ್ಯೋತ್ರ ಮುನಿಪುಂಗವೈಃ ।। ೬೬ ।।

***naraka**sthāstu yē **prētāstē mārgaṃ** tu vratātsadā* ||
paśyaṃtyēva na saṃdēhaḥ kāryō'tra munipuṃgavaiḥ || *66* ||

The ritual of lighting the lamps, association with Goddess lakṣmī, the link between **narakacaturdaśi** and king mahābali, the legend of **vāmana and mahābali**, ritual and celebrations over three days, the remembrance of ancestors and yakṣa-s and guiding their path with **fireworks** are all duly noted in the verses- all of which we practice today as well. Indeed the culture and tradition of sanātana dharma is age-old and largely uninterrupted despite the setbacks it has faced over time.

padma purāṇa is another Sanskrit religious text of the Hindu dharma. Placed between the **8th and the 10th centuries CE**, it has a dedicated chapter dealing with dīpāvaḷi in the **uttara khaṇḍa**. Consisting of 113 verses, it describes customs and rituals associated with the festival such as having an **oil bath** on the caturdaśi, lighting lamps for **naraka** followed by numerous **lamps** in the evening at temples, homes, streets, cowsheds etc. There is also the description of worshiping bali (**balīndra pūjā**), giving **tarpaṇa** and playing **dice**. The final verses deal with **yamadvitiyā**. This continues to be celebrated as **bhā'ī dūj** in the north of our country and as **sōdara bidige by the Sankethi** community in Karnataka. Some select verses are given below

ಪೂರ್ವವಿದ್ಧಾ ಚತುರ್ದಶ್ಯಾ ಕಾರ್ತಿಕಸ್ಯ ಸಿತೇತರೇ ।
ಪಕ್ಷೇ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೂಷಸಮಯೇ ಸ್ನಾನಂ ಕುರ್ಯಾದತಂದ್ರಿತಃ ॥ ೭ ॥

*pūrvaviddhā **caturdaśyā kārtika**sya sitētarē* |
*pakṣē **pratyūṣasamayē snānaṃ** kuryādataṃdritaḥ* || *7* ||

ತೈಲೇ ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀರ್ಜಲೇ ಗಂಗಾ ದೀಪಾವಲ್ಯಾಂ ಚತುರ್ದಶೀಮ್ ।
ಪ್ರಾಪ್ತಃ ಸ್ನಾನಂ ಹಿ ಯಃ ಕುರ್ಯಾದ್ಯಮಲೋಕಂ ನ ಪಶ್ಯತಿ ॥ ೮ ॥

***tailē** lakṣmīrjalē gaṃgā dīpāvalyāṃ **caturdaśī**m* |
prāptaḥ snānaṃ hi yaḥ kuryādyamalōkaṃ na paśyati || *8* ||

ನರಕಾಯ ಪ್ರದಾತವ್ಯೋ ದೀಪಃ ಸಂಪೂಜ್ಯ ದೇವತಾಃ ।
ತತಃ ಪ್ರದೋಷಸಮಯೇ ದೀಪಾಂದದ್ಯಾನ್ಮನೋಹರಾನ್ ॥ ೧೪ ॥

***narakāya pradātavyō dīpaḥ** saṃpūjya dēvatāḥ* |
tataḥ pradōṣasamayē dīpāndadyānmanōharān || *14* ||

ಬ್ರಹ್ಮವಿಷ್ಣುಶಿವಾದೀನಾಂ ಭವನೇಷು ವಿಶೇಷತಃ ।
ಕೂಟಾಗಾರೇಷು ಚೈತ್ಯೇಷು ಸಭಾಸು ಚ ನದೀಷು ಚ ॥ ೧೫ ॥

brahmaviṣṇuśivādīnāṃ bhavanēṣu viśēṣataḥ |
kūṭāgārēṣu caityēṣu sabhāsu ca nadīṣu ca || *15* ||

ಪ್ರಾಕಾರೋದ್ಯಾನವಾಪೀಷು ಪ್ರತೋಲೀ ನಿಷ್ಕುಟೇಷು ಚ ।
ಮಂದಿರಾಸು ವಿವಿಕ್ತಾಸು ಹಸ್ತಿಶಾಲಾಸು ಚೈವ ಹಿ ॥ ೧೬ ॥

prākārōdyānavāpīṣu pratōlī niṣkuṭēṣu ca |
maṃdirāsu viviktāsu hastiśālāsu caiva hi || *16* ||

ಶಂಕರಶ್ಚ ಭವಾನೀ ಚ ಕ್ರೀಡಯಾ ದ್ಯೂತಮಾಸ್ಥಿತೌ ।
ಭವಾನ್ಯಾಭ್ಯರ್ಚಿತಾ ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀರ್ಧೇನುರೂಪೇಣ ಸಂಸ್ಥಿತಾ ॥ ೨೫ ॥

*śaṃkaraśca bhavānī ca krīḍayā **dyūtam**āsthitau* |
bhavānyābhyarcitā lakṣmīrdhēnurūpēṇa saṃsthitā || *25* ||

ಪ್ರಥಮಂ ವಿಜಯೋ ಯಸ್ಯ ತಸ್ಯ ಸಂವತ್ಸರಂ ಸುಖಮ್ ।
ಏವಂ ಗತೇ ನಿಶೀಥೇ ತು ಜನೇ ನಿದ್ರಾರ್ಧಲೋಚನೇ ॥ ೨೭ ॥

***prathamaṃ vijayō** yasya tasya saṃvatsaraṃ sukham* |
ēvaṃ gatē niśīthē tu janē nidrārdhalōcanē || *27* ||

ಲೋಕೈಶ್ಚಾಪಿ ಗೃಹಸ್ಯಾಂತೇ ಸಪರ್ಯಾಂ ಶುಕ್ಲತಂಡುಲೈಃ ।
ಸಂಸ್ಥಾಪ್ಯ ಬಲಿರಾಜಾನಂ ಫಲೈಃ ಪುಷ್ಪೈಶ್ಚ ಪೂಜಯೇತ್ ॥ ೫೪ ॥

lōkaiścāpi gṛhasyāṃtē saparyāṃ śuklataṃḍulaiḥ |
saṃsthāpya balirājānaṃ phalaiḥ puṣpaiśca pūjayēt || 54 ||

ಅತೋ ಯಮದ್ವಿತೀಯೇಯಂ ತ್ರಿಷುಲೋಕೇಷು ವಿಶ್ರುತಾ ।
ತಸ್ಮಾನ್ನಿಜಗೃಹೇ ವಿಪ್ರ ನ ಭೋಕ್ತವ್ಯಂ ತತೋ ಬುಧೈಃ ॥ ೯೬ ॥

*atō **yamadvitīyē**yaṃ triṣulōkēṣu viśrutā* |
tasmānnijagṛhē vipra na bhōktavyaṃ tatō budhaiḥ || *96* ||

ಸ್ನೇಹೇನ ಭಗಿನೀಹಸ್ತಾದ್ಭೋಕ್ತವ್ಯಂ ಪುಷ್ಟಿವರ್ದ್ಧನಂ ।
ದಾನಾನಿ ಚ ಪ್ರದೇಯಾನಿ ಭಗಿನೀಭ್ಯೋ ವಿಧಾನತಃ ॥ ೯೭ ॥

*snēhēna **bhaginīhastādbhōktavyaṃ** puṣṭivarddhanaṃ* |
dānāni ca pradēyāni bhaginībhyō vidhānataḥ || *97* ||

ಸರ್ವಾಸು ಭಗಿನೀಹಸ್ತಾದ್ಭೋಕ್ತವ್ಯಂ ಬಲವರ್ದ್ಧನಮ್ ।
ಊರ್ಜೇ ಶುಕ್ಲದ್ವಿತೀಯಾಯಾಂ ಪೂಜಿತಸ್ತರ್ಪಿತೋ ಯಮಃ ॥ ೯೯ ॥

*sarvāsu **bhaginīhastādbhōktavyaṁ** balavarddhanam* |
*ūrjē **śukladvitīyā**yāṁ pūjitastarpitō yamaḥ*॥ *99*॥

Poet **brahmaśiva**, in his **samayaparīkṣe (1000 CE)** references the lighting of the lamps in the darkness of amāvāsya which he calls ದೀವಳಿಗೆಯ ಕಟ್ತಲೆ **dīvaḷigeya kaḷtale**. This is set in the kandapadya metre.

ದೀವಳಿಗೆಯ ಕಟ್ತಲೆಯೊಳ್	***dīvaḷige**ya kaḷtaleyoḷ*
ದೀವಿಗೆಗಳ್ ಬೆಳಪ ತೆಱದೆ ಕಲಿಕಾಲದೆ ಮಿ- ।	***dīvige**gaḷ beḷapa teṟade kalikālade mi-* ।
ಥ್ಯಾವಿಳಸಿತವೆನೆ ಸಂದ ಜ	*thyāviḷasitavene sanda ja-*
ನಾವಳಿಗಳ ನಡುವೆ ಬೆಳಗುತಿರ್ಪರ್ ಭವ್ಯರ್ ॥	*nāvaḷigaḷa naḍuve beḷagutirpar bhavyar* ॥

Further Literary Evidence– 10th Century CE and beyond

hēmacandra (1088-1172 CE) was a polymath from **Gujarat**. Praised as **kalikālasarvajña**, his contribution to the codification of the grammar of the precursor to **Gujarati** language is seminal. Amongst his many works, **deśīnāmamālā** is a **dictionary** of **Prakrit** and other non-Sanskrit words. In the third category within that text, he documents **jakkharattī** as another name for **dīpāvaḷi**.

ಜಚ್ಛಂದಓ ಸತನ್ತಮ್ಮಿ ಜಕ್ಖರತ್ತೀ ಅ ದೀವಾಲೀ ।	*jacchanda'ō satantammi **jakkharattī** a **dīvālī***
ಜಣ್ಣೋಹಣೋ ಣಿಸಿಅರೇ ಜಂಘಾಚೇಓ ಅ ಚಚ್ಚರಏ ॥೪೩॥	*jaṇṇōhaṇō ṇisi'arē jaṅghācē'ō a caccara'ē*॥*43*॥
ಜಚ್ಛಂದಓ ಸ್ವಚ್ಛನ್ದಃ । ಕಪ್ರತ್ಯಯಾಭಾವೇ ಜಚ್ಛಂದೋ । ಜಕ್ಖರತ್ತೀ	*jacchanda'ō svacchandaḥ. kapratyayābhāvē jacchandō*
ದೀಪಾಲಿಕಾ । ಜಕ್ಖೋಹಣೋ ರಾಕ್ಷಸಃ । ಜಂಘಾಚೇಓ ಚತ್ವರಮ್ ॥	***jakkharattī dīpālikā**. jakkhōhaṇō rākṣasaḥ. jaṅghācē'ō catvaram*॥

Nayasena notes the festival of **dīvaḷige** in his Jain work ಧರ್ಮಾಮೃತಂ **dharmāmṛtaṁ (1112 CE)**. He is comparing something to that festival feast.

ಕುಂಟಣಿಯ ಕೂರ್ಮೆಯಂತೆ ಪಶುವಿನ ಕರೆಹದಂತೆ ದೀವಳಿಗೆಯೂಟದಂತೆ	*kuṇṭaṇiya kūrmeyante paśuvina karehadante **dī-vaḷige**yūṭadante*

bandhuvarma also documents the lighting of **lamps** in the festival **dīvaḷige** in his work ಹರಿವಂಶಾಭ್ಯುದಯ **harivaṁśābhyudaya** in **1200 CE**. This work is available as a manuscript in The Oriental Research Institute, Mysuru and sadly remains unpublished.

ದೀವಳಿಗೆಯ ಪರ್ಬದಂದು ಸೊಡರ್ವತ್ತಿಸುವ ನೆವದೊಳ್	*dīvaḷigeya parbadandu soḍarvattisuva nevadoḷ nama-*
ನಮಗಪಾಯಮಂ ಬಗೆವರಕ್ಕುಮೆಂದಱಿದು	*gapāyamaṁ bagevarakkumendaṟidu*

The renowned **Western Chalukya king Someshavara III** ruled from **Kalyani in Karnataka** in the early **12th Century CE**. A polymath, one of his works is the encyclopaedia **abhilāṣitārtha cintāmaṇi**, popularly called **mānasollāsa**. In the fourth part called **vinoda viṃśati** that deals with games and pastimes, he describes **varāṭikī** directly after games of dice- **pāśaka** (**pagaḍe, dāyam, pacīsī**). He notes the association with **āśvina (naraka) caturdaśī**, taking a **ritual bath**, offering **tarpaṇa** to yama, celebrating with family and community, and **playing dice**.

ಕ್ರಮಾದ್ವರಾಟಿಕೀಕ್ರೀಡಾ ವಕ್ಷ್ಯತೇ ಲಕ್ಷಣಾನ್ವಿತಾ ॥೭೧೨॥	*kramād**varāṭikī**krīḍā vakṣyatē lakṣaṇānvitā*॥*712*॥
ಆಶ್ವಿನಸ್ಯ ಚತುರ್ದಶ್ಯಾಂ ಕೃಷ್ಣಪಕ್ಷೇ ದಿನೋದಯೇ ।	***āśvinasya caturdaśyāṁ** kṛṣṇapakṣē dinōdayē*
ಸ್ನಾತ್ವಾ ಚ ದೇವಮಭ್ಯರ್ಚ ಕೃತ್ವಾ ಚ ಯಮತರ್ಪಣಂ ॥೭೧೩॥	*snātvā ca dēvamabhyarca kṛtvā ca **yamatarpaṇaṁ***॥ *713*॥
ಮಹತಾ ತೂರ್ಯಘೋಷೇಣ ವಿಪ್ರಾಶೀರಭಿನನ್ದಿತಃ ।	*mahatā tūryaghōṣēṇa viprāśīrabhinanditaḥ*
ಅನ್ತಃಪುರಪುರನ್ಧ್ರೀಭಿಃ ಕೃತನೀರಾಜನೋ ನೃಪಃ ॥೭೧೪॥	*antaḥpurapurandhrībhiḥ kṛtanīrājanō nṛpaḥ*॥*714*॥
ತತಃ ಪುತ್ರಾನ್ಶ್ಚ ಪೌತ್ರಾನ್ಶ್ಚ ಸಮಾಹೂಯಾನ್ಯಬಾನ್ಧವಾನ್ ।	*tataḥ putrāṅśca pautrāṅśca samāhūyān'yabāndhavān*
ಮಿತ್ರೈರ್ಭೃತ್ಯೈಃ ಸಮಾಯುಕ್ತಃ ಕೃತಾಹಾರೋ ಯಥೋಚಿತಮ್ ॥೭೧೫॥	*mitrairbhṛtyaiḥ samāyuktaḥ kṛtāhārō yathōcitam*॥*715*॥
ವಿಸರ್ಜ್ಯ ಚ ತತಃ ಸರ್ವಾನಾಹೂಯ ದ್ಯೂತಕೋವಿದಾನ್ ।	*visarjya ca tataḥ sarvānāhūya **dyūta**kōvidān*
ಆರಭೇತ ತತೋ ದ್ಯೂತಂ ಯಾವದಾಯಾತಿ ಪಞ್ಚಮೀ ॥೭೧೬॥	*ārabhēta tatō **dyūtaṁ** yāvadāyāti pañcamī*॥*716*॥

kēśirāja was a **kannada** litterateur and grammarian from the **13th Century CE**. One of his books, **śabdamaṇidarpaṇam**, the authoritative **grammar** on the Kannada language records **dīpāvaḷike**, **dīpāḷige** and **dīvaḷige** under the usages for sūtra 299.

ವೃತ್ತಿ॥
ಆವಳಿಕೆಗೆ- ದೀಪಾವಳಿಕೆ- ದೀಪಾಳಿಗೆ, ಆದಿಯಕ್ಕರಕ್ಕಂ ಲೋಪಂ. ದೀವಳಿಗೆಯುಮದಱಿನುಂಟು.

vr̥tti॥
āvaḷikege- **dīpāvaḷike- dīpāḷige**, ādiyakkarakkaṁ lōpaṁ. **dīvaḷige**yumadaṟinuṇṭu.

gubbiya mallaṇṇārya is a **kannada** poet from the **16th century CE** and the author of several works including the **vīraśaivāmr̥ta purāṇa**. Set in the vārdhaka ṣaṭpadi metre, one of its verses (3:11:16) mentions the festival of **dīvaḷige** and notes its connection with he slaying of **narakāsura**.

ಧರಣಿಯಂ ತಂದೆಂದಿನಂದದಿಂದೀ ಜಗಕೆ
ಪರಕಲಿಸಿ ನೊಂದಜನರೆಲ್ಲರಂ ಸಂತೈಸಿ
ನರಕಾಸುರನ ಮಿಕ್ಕ ಕರುಳ ರಾಸಿಯೊಳೋಕುಳಿಯನಾಡಿಸಿದನನಿಬರಾ ।ಹರಿಯ ಲೆಂಕರುಗಳಿಂಡೆಯ ಹಬ್ಬವೆಂದಾಡು-
ವರು ಬಹಳ ದೀಪಗಳನಳ್ತಿಯಿಂದಂ ಬೆಳಗು-
ತಿರಲು ದೀವಳಿಗೆಯಾದುದು ಕಣಾ ಬಳಿಕ ಕೊಬ್ಬಿದುದಾ ವರಾಹಾಂಗವೂ ॥

dharaṇiyaṁ tandeṁdinandadindī jagake
parakalisi nondajanarellaraṁ santaisi
narakāsurana mikka karuḷa rāsiyoḷōkuḷiyanāḍisidananibarā |
hariya leṁkarugaḷiṁḍeya habbavendāḍu-
varu bahaḷa dīpagaḷanaḷtiyindaṁ beḷagu-
tiralu **dīvaḷige**yādudu kaṇā baḷika kobbidudā varāhāṁgavū ॥

bhaṭṭākalaṅka is a **Kannada** grammarian from the **16th-17th centuries**. He authored the **karnāṭaka śabdānuśāsana**. Written in **Sanskrit**, it codifies the rules into sūtras. The vyākhyā for sūtra 378 notes **dīpāvaḷikā**.

ದೀವಳಿಗೆ ದೀವಾಳಿಗೆ ಉಭಯತ್ರಾಪಿ ದೀಪಾವಳಿಕಾ. ***dīvaḷige dīvāḷige*** *ubhayatrāpi dīpāvaḷikā.*

Accounts of Foreign Travellers, and Islamic and English Historians/ Chroniclers

We also see famed **travellers from overseas** referring to the celebration of the festival of lights. Some of these travellers are **Al Biruni in the 11th C CE** from **Iran, Niccolò de' Conti** from **Italy** in the early **15th C** in and around **Vijayanagara**, and **Domingo Paes** from **Portugal** in the **16th C** Vijayanagara. These travellers have documented details such as the association with the **New Moon in the kārttika** month, lighting of innumerable **oil lamps** in temples and on the house roofs day and night, and people dressing in **new festive clothes** and gathering to celebrate with music, dance & feasting.

Here is an excerpt from **Domingo Paes**' account where he is describing the festival of lamps. He refers to the **gifting of new clothes**. However, he incorrectly calls dīpāvaḷi as the New Year. This is clear from the fact that his account is from October. The Kannada new year ugādi is a spring festival, not autumnal. Perhaps Paes mistook this from knowledge he may have received about another part of Portuguese India (Cambay). The Gujaratis celebrate the New Year on the day of dīpāvaḷi.

> ***festas*** *em que todos* ***vestem panos novos*** *e ricos e galantes, e cada hitu como o tém, e déo todos os capitiees panos a toda sua gente de muytas cores e galantes*

Islamic historians have also noted celebrations during the festival. **Abu'l Fazl** was a historian and chronicler from the latter half of the **16th century CE** in the court of the Mughal emperor **Akbar**. In his **Ain-I-Akbari**, he documents that **Dvārakā** is esteemed holy by the Hindus and that crowds gather here on **diwāli**. Further along, he records details of when **dipāli** is celebrated (on the 15th of the Krishna-paksha of Kārttika) and notes

that **lamps** are lit, and compares it to the Muslim festival of Shab-i-barāt. He says that that night is considered auspicious for **playing dice**. He states that it is the greatest of the festivals for the Vaisya caste.

In the **Akbarnama**, **Abu'l Fazl** documents that Diwali was celebrated in **Kashmir** in **1592** by **adorning boats, riverbanks and roofs with lamps**. This was in the context of the Mughal invasion and annexation of Kashmir. However, the date is noted as 12th October whereas **dīpāvaḷi** fell on the 31st October (naraka caturdasi) in that year. Contrary to popular and oft-repeated claims, there is no mention of the celebrations of **dīpāvaḷi** in the Mughal courts or palaces.

Mirat-I-Ahmadi is a history of **Gujarat** written in **Persian** by **Ali Muhammad Khan** in the **18th century**. One of the **Farman**s (royal decree) of **Aurangzeb in 1665** is given in full. Amongst many things covered, the Farman **prohibits the celebrations of dīwālī and Holi** in the city of **Ahmedabad**, its suburbs and towns. It specifies that **dīwālī lamps shall not be lit in bazaars**. Other religious observances by Hindus and Jains are also restricted or prohibited such as f**orcing them to keep their shops and business open** on days they would usually close them.

Historians and writers of the colonial British period also document festivities intrinsic to the festival. **John fryer** travelled India between the years **1672 to 1681**. In his book, "**A New Account Of East India And Persia Being Nine Years Travels** (1672-1681)" published in 1698, he gives "A description of **Surat** and journey into Duccan". He notes the following about the festival of **Dually** (**dīwāḷī**) in Surat and western India.

> *The f**irst New Moon in October** is the Banyans **Dually**, a **great Day of Celebration** to their Pagan Deities, when they are very kind-hearted, presenting their Masters with **Gifts**, as knowing they shall be no Losers, and Entertain one another with mutual Mirth and **Banquetting**.*

Fryer further calls **Aurangzeb** as "This **Religious Bigot of an Emperor Auren Zeeb**" and records that "*the Jollity and Pomp of the Heathens is much allayed by the Puritanism and unlimited Power of the Moors*". He notes that the Hindus are levied two taxes (**Jizya**) with the highest being on Brachmins and that he is on a **"project" of converting** the Hindus "over to his faith".

William Jones, in 1799, notes the details of various festivals and religious occurrences in the Hindu calendar as noted in almanacs and a list of holidays published in Calcutta. With regard to **dīpāvaḷi**, he notes celebrations over five days spanning the end of the month of Aswina and the beginning of Cartica. Amongst other details, he notes **Bhūtachaturdasī Yamaterpanam, Lachmīpūja dīpānwitā** (lakṣmī pūjā)**, Syāmāpūjā, Ulcādānam, Dyūta pratipat, Belipūjā and bhrātṛ dvitīyā (bhā'ī dūj / sōdara bidige)**. In his footnotes, he gives details of the celebrations and the beliefs associated with these such as offering ***libations*** to ***yama***, *kindling and consecration of* ***torches*** and ***flaming brands*** to light the way for departed people to show the way to yama's kingdom, the playing of **dice** and celebrations with illuminations at night with **worship of the *ancient king bali***.

Let us now turn our attention to epigraphic evidence. We cannot miss a striking connection to the **Kannada** land, culture and language here. The festival of lights has been documented for at least **1200 years** in Kannada literature and inscriptions. All the inscriptions, and there are plenty, with the earliest reference to the festival of ದೀಪಾವಳಿ dīpāvaḷi are from Kannada kingdoms, be they in Kannada or Sanskrit (one copper plate), with the overwhelming majority of these being in kannada. In Kannada, the festival is called ದೀಪಾವಳಿ **dīpāvaḷi** and some variants thereof such as ದೀವಳಿಗೆ **dīvaḷige**, ದೀಹಳಿಗೆ **dīhaḷige,** ದೀಪಾಳಿಗೆ **dīpāḷige,** ದೀವಳಿ **dīvaḷi and** ದಿವಾಳಿ **divāḷi**. dīpāvaḷi is the default term today with dīvaḷige habba or dīpada habba also used to a much lesser extent. divāḷi is no longer used in this sense as it now means "bankruptcy" in modern kannada. Whilst these inscriptions have been available for study for some time and have been individually studied in considerable depth and detail, their connection to dīpāvaḷi does not appear to have been collectively well studied and documented. This article endeavours to address that gap. Let us now look at the evidence.

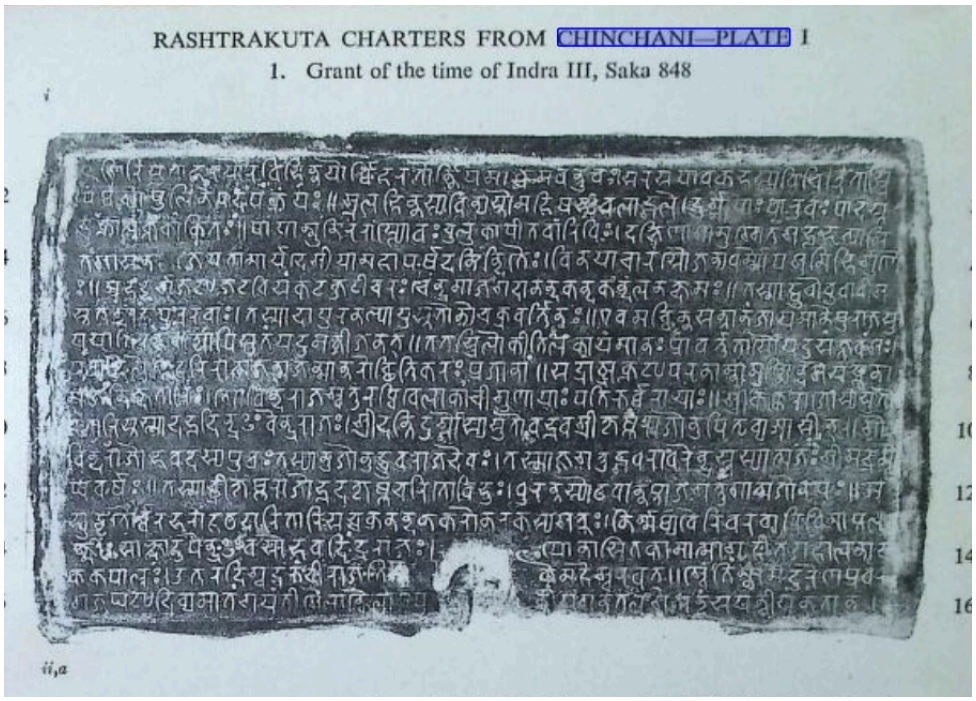
Epigraphic evidence- The 9th to the 12th Centuries CE

The earliest reference goes back to **872 CE** and is a **Kannada** inscription issued by the **Rashtrakuta king amōghavarṣa I**. It is a lengthy inscription and records grants for the festivals of bādubbe, **dīvaḷige** and **amāvāsya**, among other things. This inscription is remarkable for many reasons- it is the **earliest literary and inscriptional reference** to dīpāvaḷi found in any South Indian language and the earliest inscriptional evidence in any Indian language (if others know of earlier references, please share with me). The inscription is deep in Telugu land today in **Kazipet**. It was installed following the victory of amōghavarṣha I over the Eastern Chalukyas. An additional noteworthy point is that the pillar with the inscription is found today in the **Dargah of Hazrat Syed Shah Afzal Biabani**. There is also another pillar with a Kakatiya inscription on the same site.

ದೀವಳಿಗೆಯ ಪರ್ವ್ವದಂದು ಕರಣಕ್ಕೆ ಇರ್ಪತ್ತ ನಾಲ್ಕು ದ್ರಮ್ಮ ತಳಾರಂಗೆ ಇರ್ಪತ್ತ ನಾಲ್ಕು ದ್ರಮ್ಮ ಇಱಿದೊಡೆ ಇಱ್ನೂರ ಅಯ್ವತ್ತು ದ್ರಮ್ಮ	***dīvaḷige**ya parvvadandu karaṇakke irpatta nālku dramma taḷāraṅge irpatta nālku dramma iṟidoḍe iḷnūra ayvattu dramma*

A **copper plate** inscription in **Sanskrit** of the **rāṣṭrakūṭa** emperor **Krishna III (Sanjan plates, late 10th C CE)** mentions **dīpōtsava**. Discovered in Chinchani, Gujarat, it was issued to settle a land dispute in a **maṭha** in **Sajjan** (**saṁyāna**), Maharashtra between two parties, one of which was originally from Jalore, Rajasthan. The decree was that one party would pay 40 drammas to the other at the end of the festival of lights each year in perpetuity

मठिकयाऽस्माकं प्रतिदीपोत्सवभंगं व्यावहारिक श्रेष्ठ गंभुवक-द्रम्माः स्रोतकें देयाः	*maṭhikayāśmākaṁ **pratidīpōtsava**bhaṅgaṁ vyā-vahārika śrēṣṭha gaṁbhuvaka-drammāḥ srōtakē dēyāḥ*


RASHTRAKUTA CHARTERS FROM CHINCHANI—PLATE I

1. Grant of the time of Indra III, Saka 848

Fig. 1. Rashtrakuta Sanjan copper plates (Epigraphia Indica)

A **Kannada** inscription by the **raṭṭa** king **śāntivarma** in **Saundatti** (sugandhavarti), Belagavi from the same time period (**980 CE**) mentions a donation of oil to light the lamp for the deity on the festival of **dīpāvaḷi**. The raṭṭa kings ruled under the suzerainty of the Western Chalukyas and patronised Jainism. This inscription and the donation are to the deity in bastiguḍi, a small Jain temple near the famous Yellamma Temple in Saundatti.

ದೀಪಾವಳಿಯ ಪರ್ವಕ್ಕೆ ದೇವರ ಸೊಡರಿಂಗೆ ಗಾಣದಲೊಮ್ಮಾನೆಣ್ಣೆ ॥	***dīpāvaḷi**ya parvvakke dēvara soḍariṁge gāṇadalom-māneṇṇe* ||

A **Kannada** inscription from **1012 CE in Kotumachgi, Gadag** Taluk notes a grant/ an endowment for three festivals including **dīpāḷige**

ಅಯ್ದು ಪಣಂ ಮದುವೆಯಲೆರಡು ಪಣಂ ಮಣಿಯಲೊನ್ದು ಪಣಂ ಬಾದುಬೆ ಕಾರಪುಣ್ಣಮಿ ದೀಪಾಳಿಗೆ ಮೂಱು ವರ್ವ್ವದೊಳಂ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕವೊನ್ದು ಗದ್ಯಾಣ	*aydu paṇaṁ maduveyaleraḍu paṇaṁ maṇiyalondu* *paṇaṁ bādube kārapuṇṇami **dīpāḷi**ge mūṟu varvvadoḷaṁ* *pratyēkavondu gadyāṇa*

Another slightly earlier **Kannada** inscription by **āhavamalladēva** (referring here to the **Western Chalukya irivabeḍaṅga satyāśraya**) from **Lakkundi**, Gadag Taluk in **1007 CE** that describes his conquest of the gūrjara kingdom records the same three festivals including ***dīpāvaḷi***.

ಬ್ರಹ್ಮ ಜಿನೇಂದ್ರಗೇಹಮೆನುತಂ ಬಂದತ್ರಿ್ತಯಿಂ ಸೇಸೆಗೊಂಡು ಬಲಂಗೊಣ್ಣು ಸಮನ್ತು ಪೋದನೆಸವೀ ಗ್ರಾಮಾಧಿಪಂ ಸಂದ ಬಾದುಬೆ ದೀಪಾವಳಿ ಕಾರಪುಣ್ಣಮೆ ಯೆನಿಪ್ಪೀ ಮೂಱು ಪರ್ವಗಳೊಳ್	*brahma jinēndragēhamenutaṁ bandatrtiyiṁ sēsegoṇḍu* *balaṅgoṇṇu samantu pōdanesavī grāmādhipaṁ sanda bā-* *dube **dīpāvaḷi** kārapuṇṇame yenippī mūṟu parvagaḷoḷ*

This **kannada** inscription of the **Western chalukya** king **Vikramaditya VI** from **1096 CE** in **Balligave**, Shikaripura taluk records that **Dandanayaka Sarvadeva** built the Sarveshwara temple and donated land to it. A verse in the **kandapadya** metre wishes that the king and Sarvadeva would remain as **Rama and Lakshmana** for a lakh (hundred thousand) **dīvaḷige** festivals.

ರಾಮಂ ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮಣನಂತಿರ- ಲೀ ಮಹಿಯೊಳ್ ಸರ್ವದೇವನುಂ ರಾಯನುವು ॥ ದ್ದಾಮ ಭುಜವೀರ್ಯರಧಿಕ ಪ್ರೇಮದೆ ಸುಖಮಿರ್ಕೆ ಲಕ್ಕೆ ದೀವಳಿಗೆವರಂ ॥	***rāmaṁ lakṣmaṇan**antira-* *lī mahiyoḷ sarvadēvanuṁ rāyanuvu-* *ddāma bhujavīryaradhika* *prēmade sukhamirke **lakke dīvaḷige**varaṁ* ॥

There is a **Kannada** inscription in the Suryanarayana temple in **Magola**, **Hadagalli** Taluk (Ballari). Dating to **1115 CE** in the reign of the **Western Chalukya** king **Tribhuvanamalladeva Vikramaditya VI**, this records the grant of land by mahājana 200 and 500 to Lord sōmēśvara on the occasion of the **dīpāvaḷige** festival.

ಸ್ವಸ್ತಿ ಶ್ರೀಮತು ಸಾರ್ವ್ವರೀಸಂವತ್ಸರದ ದೀಪಾವಳಿಗೆಯಲು ಶ್ರೀಸೋಮೇಶ್ವರದೇವರಿಗೆ ಯಿಂನ್ನೂರ್ವರುಂ ವಯ್ನೂರ್ವ್ವರುಂ ನೆರೆದಿರ್ದ್ದು	*svasti śrīmatu sārvvarīsanvatsarada **dīpāvaḷige**yalu* *śrīsōmēśvaradēvarige yinnnūrvaruṁ vaynūrvvaruṁ* *neredirddu*

Another **kannada** inscription from the reign of the **Western Chalukya king Tribhuvanamalla Vikramaditya VI** by his vassal **Tribhuvanamalla Pandyadeva** of **Nolambavadi** is dated **1119 CE**. Found in **Bagali** in Harapanahalli taluk, it records a grant for the celebration of some rituals in the temple during the **dīpāvaḷi** festival.

ಶ್ರೀಮತ್ಪೆರ್ಗ್ಗಡೆ ಕಾವರಾಜಂ ತವಗೆ ದೀಪಾವಳಿಯಪರ್ಬ್ಬದಲು ಮಹಾಜನ ಉದಲುಕುಡುವ ಗದ್ಯಾಣ ಎರಡಱೊಳಗೆ ದೇವರಂಗಭೋಗಕ್ಕೆ ಬಿಟ್ಟ ಗದ್ಯಾಣ	*śrīmatperggaḍe kāvarājaṁ tavage **dīpāvaḷi**yaparbbadalu* *mahājana udalukuḍuva gadyāṇa eraḍaṟoḷage dēvaraṅ-* *gabhōgakke biṭṭa gadyāṇa*

A **vīragallu (Hero Stone**) inscription in **Kannada** at **Bandalike**, Shikaripura taluk dated **1123 CE** narrates the sacrifice of a cowherd dēkeya nāyaka who **offered his head** to swing on a pole to worship God **Kondasabavi Brahma** to fulfil his **vow** (**harake**). This was to thank God for the birth of a son to the king. The celebration of **dīpāvaḷi** is mentioned. The practice of offering one's head as a vow is called **siḍidale** ("bouncing head"). Interestingly, Tamil regions had a similar practice called tūṅgutalai ("swinging head").

ಕೊಂಡಸಬಾವಿಯ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮದೇವಂಗೆ ತನ್ನ ಸಿಡಿದಲೆಯಂ ಕೊಟ್ಟಿಹೆನೆಂದು ಹರಸಲು ಅರಸಂ ಕುಮಾರನ್ನ ಹಡದಡೆ ತನ್ನ ಸಿಡಿದಲೆಯಂ ಕೊಟ್ಟ ಗಲ್ಡೆ..೧೦ ದೀಪಾವಳಿ ಗೆಯಲು	*koṇḍasabāviya brahmadēvaṅge tanna **siḍidale**yaṁ koṭṭe-* *henendu harasalu arasaṁ kumāranna haḍadaḍe tanna* *siḍidaleyaṁ koṭṭa galḍe..10 **dīpāvaḷi** geyalu*



Fig. 2. Viragallu (Epigraphia Carnatica)

A **Kannada inscription** from the **12th C in Lakkundi**, Gadag taluk records an offering of Betel Nuts (Areca) to God (candramauḷīśvara) by **kēṇikāṟa yēciseṭṭi** on the occasion of **dīpāvaḷi**. The gift and the inscription are by a civilian.

ಹಿರಿಯ ಕೇಣಿಕಾಱ ವಿನಯಸಿಂಹನಪ್ಪ ಯೇಚಿಸೆಟ್ಟಿ ತಂನಕ್ಕಸಾಲದ ಕೇಣಿಯಲು ದೀಪಾವಳಿಯ ಪರ್ವ್ವದಲು ದೇವರ ವೀಳೆಯಕ್ಕೆ ಬಿಟ್ಟಡಕೆ ೪೦೦ ॥	*hiriya kēṇikāṟa vinayasiṁhanappa yēciseṭṭi tannakkasālada kēṇiyalu **dīpāvaḷi**ya parvvadalu dēvara vīḷeyakke biṭṭaḍake 400*॥

Another **Kannada** inscription from **Yammiganur**, Hirekerur taluk (Haveri) by the **Western Chalukya** king **Jagadekamalla II** dated to **1143 CE** records donations towards several festivals including **dīpāvaḷi** on the occasion of the renovation of the Rameshwara temple.

ನಂದಾದೀವಿಗೆಗ ಸುಗಂಧಯುಕ್ತ ನಿತ್ಯಪೂಜೆಗಂ ನಿವೇದ್ಯಕ್ಕ ಚೈತ್ರ ಪವಿತ್ರಾರೋಹಣಕ್ಕ ದೀಪಾವಳಿಯ ದೀಪೋಛವಕ್ಕಮೆಂದು ಬಿಟ್ಟ ಧರ್ಮ	*nandādīvigega sugandhayukta nityapūjegaṁ nivēdyakka caitra pavitrārōhaṇakka **dīpāvaḷi**ya **dīpōchava**kkamendu biṭṭa dharma*

A **Kannada** inscription of the **Western Chalukya** king **Jagadekamalla II** (**1138-1152 CE**) is found in **Sōlavāḍagi** in Bagevadi (Vijayapura district) at the entrance of what is **now a mosque**. It records a decree by the **paṭṭasāliga**-s of the village that each family (okkal) would offer oil for the festival of **dīvaḷige** in perpetuity.

ಚೈತ್ರಪರ್ವ್ವದೆ ಪವಿತ್ರವಿಳಾಸದೆ ಲೀಲೆಗೊಂಡು ದೀವಳಿಗೆಯ ಪರ್ವ್ವದಂದರವನೆಣ್ಣೆಯನೊಕ್ಕಲೊಕ್ಕಲೊಳೊಂದು ಹಾಗಮಂ ಫಳಯುತಮಾನ್ಯವಂ	*caitraparvvade pavitraviḷāsade līlegoṇḍu **dīvaḷige**ya parvvadandaravaneṇṇeyanokkalokkaloḷondu hāgamaṁ phaḷayutamānyavaṁ*

A **Kannada** inscription by the **Kalachuri** king **Bijjala II**, dated **1159 CE** is found in the rudraganṭi rāmaliṅga temple in **Muttagi**, Bagevadi taluk. Bijjala II was a vassal of the Kalyani Chalukya king Vikramaditya VI. It was during his reign that Basavanna and the Virashaiva movement began and gained momentum. This inscription records donations of flowers, a tamarind tree, grains and money of **1 gadyāṇa** each year in perpetuity for the celebration of **dīpāḷi** at the temple.

ಹುಣಿಸೆಯ ಮರನೊಂದಱ ಹಂಣ್ಣಂ ಕುಡುವನು ವರ್ಷಂ ಪ್ರತಿ ದೀಪಾಳಿಗೆ ದೇವರ್ಗ್ಗಿಕುವ ಗದ್ಯಾಣ ೧ ಇಂತಿನಿತುಮಂ ನಡಸಿ	*huṇeseya maranondaṛa haṇṇnaṁ kuḍuvanu varṣaṁ prati **dīpāḷi**ge dēvarggikuva **gadyāṇa 1** intinitumaṁ naḍasi*

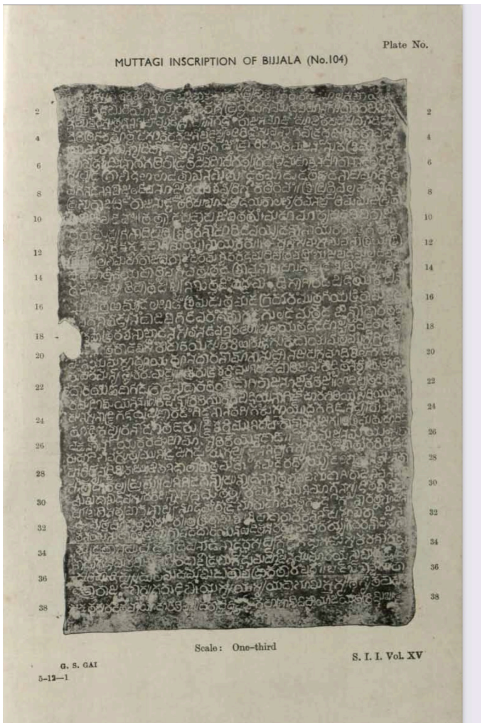


Fig. 3. Kalachuri Inscription, Muttagi (Epigraphia Indica)

One more **Kannada inscription** commissioned by the **Kalachuri** king **Bijjana** (bijjaṇa also called bijjaḷa) in **1167 CE** in the īśvara temple in **Benachamatti** village (beṇacamaṭṭi) in Ron Taluk, decrees an offering of 1 măna of oil from each family on **dīpāvaḷi**.

ದೀಪಾವಳಿಯ ಪರ್ವ್ವದಲ್ಲಿಯೊಕ್ಕಲೊಳ್ ಎಂಣೆ ಮಾನವೊಂದು ಮಳಿಗೆಯೊಳಗ್ಗೈನೂರ್ವ್ವರ್	***dīpāvaḷi**ya parvvadalliyokkaloḷ eṁṇe mānavondu maḷigeyoḷagainūrvvar*

A **kannada** inscription dated **1184 CE** from the reign of the last king of the **Western Chalukya** empire, **Someshwara IV** is found in the Chandramaulishwara temple at **lokkiguṇḍi** (**Lakkundi**), Gadag. This records a gift of money and materials (pepper vines, betel leaves etc) to Lord ayistara kēśavāditya. These are for various occasions including **dīpāvaḷi** by various devout persons.

ದೀಪಾವಳಿಯ ಹರ್ವ್ವದಲು ದೇವರ ಭೋಗಕ್ಕೆ ಬಿಟ್ಟ ಮೆಣಸು ಬಳ್ಳೆ ಯೆರಡು ಕಾರಪುಣಮಿಯಲು ದೇವರ್ಗ್ಗೆ ಹಬ್ಬಕ್ಕೆಂದು ಬಿಟ್ಟ ಬೆಲ್ಲ ೨೦ ಬ್ಯವಹಾರಿ ಸಂಕಂಣನಾ ಸೋವಂಣ ಮೆಳಸಿನ ಕೊಳಗದ	***dīpāvaḷi**ya harvvadalu dēvara bhōgakke biṭṭa meṇasu baḷḷe yeraḍu kārapuṇamiyalu dēvarggge habbakkendu biṭṭa bella 20 byavahāri saṅkaṇṇanā sōvaṇṇa meḷasina koḷagada*

We will finish this part with **Telugu** making an appearance on the scene for the the first time. This **undated** inscription from the Tripurantakeshwara temple in **Tripurantakam**, Markapuram taluk (presently Prakasam district) is placed in the **12th century CE** and records gift by a **Manuma Gannaya** of cows and calves for maintaining **lamps** in the temple. While there is room for **dīpāvali** here to be interpreted as a row of lamps, the occasion **āśvayija amāvāsyā** clarifies without any doubt that the gift was made for the festival.

ಖರಸಂವತ್ಸರ ಆಶ್ವಿಜ ಬ ೧೫ ಸೋ ಸ್ವಸ್ತಿ ಶ್ರೀಮತುಮನುಮಗನ್ನಯ ಶ್ರೀತ್ರಿಪುರಾಂತಕ ದೇವರಕಿ ದೀಪಾವಲಿಕುಂ ಬುತ್ತೆಂಚಿನ ಮೊದಾಲು ೧೯೫ ವಡ್ಡಲುವೆಯ್ಯಲು ೫ ಗಾನು ೧೨೨ ಎಡ್ಲುಂ ಕೋಡಲು ೧೨೦.	*kharasaṁvatsara **āśvija ba 15** sō svasti śrīmatumanumagannaya śrītripurāntaka dēvaraki **dīpāvali**kuṁ butteñcina modālu 195 vaḍḍaluveyyalu 5 gānu 122 eḍluṁ kōḍalu 120.*

ఖరసంవత్సర ఆశ్వీజ బ ౧౫ సో స్వస్తి శ్రీమతుమనుమగన్నయ
శ్రీత్రిపురాంతక దేవరకి దీపావలికుం బుత్తెంచిన మొదాలు ౧౯౫
వడ్డలువెయ్యలు ౫ గాను ౧౨౨ ఎడ్లుం కోడలు ౧౨౦.

In the previous part we saw a gripping and lengthy act by Kannada with Sanskrit making a guest appearance and Telugu peeping in at the very end. In this part, Telugu, Sanskrit, and subsequently Tamil have more substantial roles alongside Kannada. Only a small number of Kannada inscriptions have been included here even though many more were found.

Further Epigraphic evidence- 12th Century onwards

Moving forward to the 13th Century CE, let us make a quick trip up to the northern part of India. This is an inscription of the **Chahamana** clan Inscribed in **1211** CE. The text is in **Sanskrit** prose in the **Nagari** script. It records the history of the construction and reconstruction of the Jain temple kuvaravihāra in jābālipura (**Jalor** in Marwar, Rajasthan), and the consecration of a new golden cupola and a **central hall for dramatic performances** on the day of the festival of lamps (**dīpōtsava**).

ధ్వజారోపణప్రతిష్ఠాయాం కృతీయాం సం ౧౨౬౮ వర్షే
దీపోత్సవదినే అభినవనిష్పన్న ప్రేక్షా మధ్యమణ్డపే...
ध्वजारोपणप्रतिष्ठायां कृतीयां सं १२६८ वर्षे **दीपोत्सव**दिने अभिनवनिष्पन्न प्रेक्षा मध्यमण्डपे...

*dhvajaropaṇapratiṣṭhāyāṃ kṛtāyāṃ saṃ 1268 varṣe **dīpotsava**dine abhinavaniṣpanna prekṣā madhya-maṇḍape...*

Let us look at some more inscriptions from the Telugu regions. Firstly, a **Telugu** inscription from the reign of **Kakatiya queen Rudramadevi** dated **1265 CE**. This is found at the Anjaneya temple in **Alugadapa**, Miriyalaguda taluk. Apart from donation of land to the temple by the mahāpradhāni kannāradēva nāyaka, the inscription documents various donations made by **rachavaru** (king) towards several festivals such as **tirupavitra, jayanti and dīpāvaḷi** . For dīpāvali, an offering of one **aḍḍuga** (a monetary unit) for the **lamps** is noted. It is notable that the queen Rudramadevi is referred to as king in inscriptions.

తిరుపవిత్రానకు౧జింనంజయంతికింజింనందీపావలినాంటిదీపాలకు అడ్డుగు దవనపుంనమనాంటి దవనానకు దంమము ఇచ్చిరి।
తిరుపవిత్రానకు ౧ జింనం జయంతి కిం జింనం దీపావలినాంటి దీపాలకు అడ్డుగు దవనపుంనమనాంటి దవనానకు దంమము ఇచ్చిరి।

*tirupavitrānaku 1 jiṃnaṃ jayaṃti kiṃ jiṃnaṃ **dīpāvali**nāṃṭi **dīpālaku aḍḍugu** davanapuṃnamanaṃṭi davanānaku daṃmmamu icciri।*

Another Telugu inscription, of the **Kakatiya king Ganapatideva** (father of Rudramadevi) is found in the cennakēśava temple **Pammy** in Khammam district. This inscription was issued in increments starting at 1236 CE. The part where donations of money, food and provisions to various festivals including **dīpāvali** are recorded dates to **1296 CE**.

దీపావలిపల్లిభోగందేవ౧– రకుబియ్యంనళ॥ఆపేసలున॥
నేయిసి౧సంక్రాంతిపల్లిభోగంసేసి
దీపావలిపల్లి భోగం దేవ ౧– రకు బియ్యం న ళ ॥ ఆ పెసలు న ॥
నేయి సి ౧ సంక్రాంతి పల్లి భోగం సేసి

***dīpāvali**palli bhōgaṃ dēva 1- raku biyyaṃ na 4॥ ā pesalu na॥ nēyi si 1 **saṅkrānti** palli bhōgaṃ sēsi*

Two inscriptions of the **Eastern Gangas of Trikalinga**, both found at the Varaha Lakshminarasimhaswamy temple in **Simhachalam** refer to dīpāvaḷi. Both of these are bilingual in **Sanskrit and Telugu**. The first is dated to the reign of **Bhanu Deva, 1270 CE**. The donation of **lamp-posts and lamps** by the brothers **cittanagōpāḷu and narasiṃhagōpāḷu** is recorded. The donation is couched in a beautiful verse set in the **sragdharā** metre followed by the same in Telugu prose. Interestingly, even the benedictory "svastiśrī" is included as part of the verse.

స్వస్తిశ్రీ శాకవర్షే నయననలశశి క్ష్మామితే కార్త్తికే తద్–
దీపావళ్యామదత్తాన్నరహరిభవనే హారితఖ్యాతగోత్రో।

svastiśrī śākavarṣē nayananalaśaśi-kṣmāmitē kārttikē tad-

ಗೋಪಾಳೋ ದೀಪದಂಡಾವಪಿ ಖಶರಮಿತಾಶ್ಚಿತ್ಸುಖ ಶ್ರೀನೃಸಿಂಹೋ ।
ದೀಪದ್ವಂದ್ವಾಯ ಗಾಸ್ತಾನಮರಯತನುಜೋ ಭ್ರಾತರಾವಾರ್ಕ್ಕತಾರಂ ॥
ಸ್ವಸ್ತಿಶ್ರೀ ॥ ಶಕವರ್ಷಂಬುಲು ೧೧೯೨ ಗು ನೇಂಟ್ಟಿ ಕಾರ್ತ್ತಿಕ ದೀಪಾವಳಿ
ಮಹೋತ್ಸವಮುನ ಹಾರಿತಗೋತ್ರಮುನ ಅಮರಯಿಗೋಪಾಳನಿ
ಕೊಡುಕುಲು ಚಿತ್ತನಗೋಪಾಳು ನರಸಿಂಹಗೋಪಾಳುಂಡುನ್ನು ತಮ
ಧರ್ಮ್ಮವುಗಾ...

*dīpāvalyā**madattān-naraharibhavanē hāritakhyātagōtrō*
|
*gōpāḷō **dīpadaṇḍā**vapi khaśaramitāścitsukha śrīnṛsiṃhō |*
*dīpadvandvā**ya gāstānamarayatanujō bhrā-*
tarāvārkkatāraṁ ||
*svastiśrī ||śakavarṣaṁbulu 1192 gu nēṁṭṭi kārttika **dīpā-**
vaḷi mahōtsavamuna hāritagōtramuna amarayigōpāḷani*
*koḍukulu **cittanagōpāḷu narasiṃhagōpāḷu**ṁḍunnu*
tama dharmmavugā...

స్వస్తిశ్రీ శాకవర్షే నయననలశశి క్ష్మామితే కార్త్తికే తద్–
దీపావళ్యామదత్తాన్నరహరిభవనే హారితఖ్యాతగోత్రో ।
గోపాళో దీపదండావపి ఖశరమితాశ్చిత్సుఖ శ్రీనృసింహో ।
దీపద్వంద్వాయ గాస్తానమరయతనుజో భ్రాతరావార్క్కతారం ॥
స్వస్తిశ్రీ ॥ శకవర్షంబులు ౧౧౯౨ గు నేంట్టి కార్త్తిక దీపావళి
మహోత్సవమున హారితగోత్రమున అమరయిగోపాళని కొడుకులు
చిత్తనగోపాళు నరసింహగోపాళుండున్ను తమ ధర్మ్మవుగా...

The second inscription dates to **1278 CE** and is the final regnal year of the monarch **Bhanu Deva** before his son Narsingha Deva II took over the reins. Hare again we have the donation recorded in the **sragdharā** metre in **Sanskrit** with further details in **Telugu prose**. **Lamps, cows, calves** etc are donated for the celebration of **dīpāvaḷi**.

ಶಾಕಾಬ್ದೇ ವ್ಯೋಮಯುಗ್ಮ–ದ್ಯುಮಣಿ–ಪರಿಣತೇ ಕಾರ್ತ್ತಿಕೇ ಕೃಷ್ಣಪಕ್ಷೇ
ದೀಪಾವಳ್ಯುತ್ಸವೇ ಶ್ರೀನರಹರಿವಪುಷಸ್– ಸಿಂಹಶೈಲಾಲಯಸ್ಯ
ದೀಪಸ್ಯಾಖಂಡ್ಡಧಾಮ್ನಸ್–ಸವಿಧವಿವೃತಯೇ ಶ್ರೀಮದಲ್ಲಾಳನಾಥ–
ಪ್ಪೆರ್ಮಾಳಾಖ್ಯಾತ್ಮಜಾತೋ ವಿಯ...ಸೋಪ್ಯಧಾನ್ನವ್ಯಧೇಮಾಃ ॥
. – . -.
ವಿಜಯದೇವಪಡಿರಾಯಲ ಕಳಿಂಗ ಪರೀಕ್ಷ ಮಜ್ಜಿತವಮುನ ಕಾರ್ತ್ತಿಕ ದೀಪಾವಳಿ ಮಹೋತ್ಸವಮುನಾಂಡು ವಿಶ್ವಾಮಿತ್ರಗೋತ್ರಮುನ
ದ್ರಾವಿಡಪೆರುಮಾಳಿ ಕೊಡ್ಕು ಅಲ್ಲಾಳನಾಯಕುಂಡು

ಶಾಕಾಬ್ದೆ ವ್ಯೋಮಯುಗ್ಮ–ದ್ಯುಮಣಿ–ಪರಿಣತೆ ಕಾರ್ತ್ತಿಕೆ ಕೃಷ್ಣಪಕ್ಷೆ
ದೀಪಾವಳೆಯುತ್ಸವೆ ಶ್ರೀನರಹರಿವಪುಷಸ್–ಸಿಂಹಶೈಲಾಲಯಸ್ಯ
ದೀಪಸ್ಯಾಖಂಡ್ಡಧಾಮ್ನಸ್– ಸವಿಧವಿವೃತಯೆ ಶ್ರೀಮದಲ್ಲಾಳನಾಥ–
ಪ್ಪೆರ್ಮಾಳಾಖ್ಯಾತ್ಮಜಾತೋ ವಿಯ...ಸೋಪ್ಯಧಾನ್ನವ್ಯಧೆಮಾಃ ॥
. – . -.

ವಿಜಯದೆವಪಡಿರಾಯಲ ಕಳಿಂಗ ಪರೀಕ್ಷ ಮಜ್ಜಿತವಮುನ ಕಾರ್ತ್ತಿಕ
ದೀಪಾವಳಿ ಮಹೋತ್ಸವಮುನಾಂಡು ವಿಶ್ವಾಮಿತ್ರಗೋತ್ರಮುನ
ದ್ರಾವಿಡಪೆರುಮಾಳಿ ಕೊಡ್ಕು ಅಲ್ಲಾಳನಾಯಕುಂಡು

śākābdē vyōmayugma-dyumāṇi-pariṇatē kārttikē kṛṣṇa-
pakṣē
***dīpāvalyutsavē** śrīnaraharivapuṣas-siṃhaśailālayasya*
***dīpasyākhaṇḍadhāmnas**-savidhavivṛtayē śrīmadal-*
lāḷanātha-
pperumāḷākhyātmajātō viya...sōpyadhānnavyadhēmāḥ ॥

. – . -.

*vijayadevapaḍirāyala kaliṅga parīkṣa majjitavamuna **kārttika dīpāvaḷi** mahotsavamunāṇḍu viśvāmitragō-*
*tramuna drāviḍaperumāḷi koḍku **allāḷanāyakuṇḍu***

We progress to the 14th Century CE now to take a Quick Look at two inscriptions. An **inscription** by king **Ravivarman kulaśēkharadēva of vēṇāḍu, Kerala** from **1313 CE** in the śrī Ranganatha temple in **Srirangam**, Tamil Nadu extols the greatness of the festival of lights (**dīpōtsava**). It records that the king stayed in Srirangam and celebrated vēṇāḍu. It also asserts that the festival had been celebrated from days of yore. This is in **Sanskrit** written in the **grantha** script. The first part of the inscription is versified in the śārdūlavikrīḍita metre. This is the **earliest direct reference to dīpāvaḷi in the Tamil land**, and one that does not appear to have originated from the Kannada land.

ಭೂಪಾಳೈರಿಳಕಾರ್ತ್ತವೀರ್ಯ-ಸಗರೈರ್ಯ್ಯಃ ಪೂರ್ವಮಾಸೀತ್ಕೃತಃ
ಪಶ್ಚಾತ್ಪ್ರೌಢತಮೋಹರಂ ಯದುಪತಿಸ್ತಂ ಭದ್ರದೀಪೋತ್ಸವಮ್

bhūpāḷairiḷakārttavīrya-sagarairyyaḥ pūrvamāsītkṛtaḥ
*paścātprauḍhatamōharaṁ yadupatistaṁ **bhadradīpōt-***

ಚಕ್ರೇ ಶಕ್ರ ಇವಾಶ್ರಯಸ್ಸುಮನಸಂ ಸಮ್ರಾಟ್ ತ್ರಯೀಧರ್ಮ್ಮವಿದ್- ರಂಗೇಸ್ಮಿನ್ ರುಚಿರಾಂಕ-ಸಂಶ್ರಿತ-ರಮಾರೋಚಿಷ್ಣವೇ ವಿಷ್ಣವೇ ॥	***sava**m* *cakrē śakra ivāśrayassumanasaṁ samrāṭ trayīdharm-mavid-* *raṅgēsmin rucirāṁka-saṁśrita-ramārōciṣṇavē viṣṇavē*॥

An inscription of the **Karnata** (**Vijayanagara**) emperor **Harihara II** dated **1387 CE** at the Mahishasuramardini Temple in **Nilavara**, Udupi registers assignment of income from lands towards various provisions for the celebration of several festivals including **dīvaḷige** and **śivarātri** to worship **Goddess Durga**.

ವರುಷ ೧ ಕಂ ಮೂ ೪ ದೀವಳಿಗೆಯ ಪರ್ವ್ವದಲು

ಮೂಡೆ ೨೦ ಅಂನ್ತು ನಯಿವೇದ್ಯ ಧೂಪ ತುಪ್ಪ ಅಡಕೆಲೆ ದೀವಳಿಗೆ ಶಿವರಾತ್ರಿಯ ಪಕ್ಷ ಅಯನ ಆಗ ನಡವ ಮನುಷ್ಯರ ಗ್ರಾಸ ಸಹಿತ ಸರ್ವವೆಚ್ಚ ಅಕ್ಕಿ ಭತ್ತ

Varuṣa 1 kaṁ mū 4 **dīvaḷigeya parvvadalu**

mūḍe 20 anntu nayivēdya dhūpa tuppa aḍakele **dīvaḷige śivarātri**ya pakṣa ayana āga naḍava manuṣyara grāsa sahita sarvavecca akki bhatta

Let us move swiftly on to the 15th and 16th centuries CE and sample a few inscriptions. An **inscription** from **1432 CE** is recorded in the Annual Report on South-Indian Epigraphy (1932). It is found in **Hosala** village near **Barkur**, Udupi taluk and is by the **Karnata** (**Vijayanagara**) **king dēvarāya II**. It refers to the festival as ದೀಹಳಿಗೆ **dīhaḷige**. Here the language reads like today's **Kannada** although it is from 600 years ago.

ಭೋಜನ ಕಾಣಿಕೆ ದೀಹಳಿಗೆಯ ಹಬ್ಬಕೆ	*bhōjana kāṇike **dīhaḷige**ya habbake*

Immaḍi kṛṣṇadēvarasa oḍeya, also called **Krishnaraya Odeya** was an important albeit a minor king that ruled over the **Haiva-TuLu-Konkana** region from Geresoppa. This inscription from his reign in **Bastimakki**, Bhatkal dated **1538 CE** documents recurring offerings of grains, provisions and money to the **Jain** temple of supāriśva tīrthēśvara starting on the occasion of **divāḷi**.

ಬಿಳಂಬಿ ಸಂವತ್ಸರದ ದಿವಾಳಿಗೆ ಆರಭ್ಯವಾಗಿ ಅಳದು ಕೊಡುವೆನೆಂದು ಧರ್ಮಕೆ ಬಿಟ್ಟು ಬರಸಿದ ಶಿಲಾಶಾಸನದ ಧರ್ಮ್ಮ	*biḷambi sanvatsarada **divāḷi**ge ārabhyavāgi aḷadu koḍuve-* *nendu dharmake biṭṭu barasida śilāśāsanada dharmma*

This **Tamil inscription** during the **Karnata** (Vijayanagara) king **Achyutaraya's** reign (**Tirupati, 1542 CE**) records donations for specified offerings during the festivals of māsi makham, paṅguṇi uttiram, ugādi and dīpāvaḷi. For ugādi and dīpāvaḷi (**தீபளிகை tīpaḷikai**), the offering is the sweet atirasam. This is the **earliest Tamil language inscription** that cites dīpāvaḷi.

திருப்பதியில் கோவிந்தராஜன் அமுதுசெய்தருளும் தைபூசத்துனாள் அப்பபடி ஒ மாசிமகத்துநாள் அதிரசப்படி ஒ பங்குனி உத்திரத்துநாள் அப்பபடி ஒ உகாதி **தீபளிகை**நாள் அதிரசப்படி உ	*tiruppatiyil gōvindarājaṉ amuduseydaruḷum taipūcat-* *tuṉāḷ appapaḍi 1 mācimakattunāḷ atirasappaḍi 1* *paṅguṉi uttirattunāḷ appapaḍi 1 ugādi **tīpaḷikai**ṉāḷ ati-* *rasappaḍi 2*

Another **Tamil** inscription from the reign of the **Karnata** (Vijayanagara) **king Achyutaraya's** records several donations for offerings to **Lord gōvindarāja** during several festivals including śrījayanti, kārttikai, uṟiyaḍi, ugādi and dīpāvaḷi (**tīpaḷikai**) (**Tirupati, 1531 CE**). As an interesting aside, the donation is for **dōsé**, the quintessentially Kannada breakfast food. There are numerous inscriptions offering dōsē to various deities and temples. Unsurprisingly, all these are from Kannada rulers.

ಅಮಾವಾಸ್ಯೆ ೧೩ ಕ್ಕು ದೋಸ್ಯೆ ಪಡಿ ೧೩ ಶ್ರೀಜಯಂತಿನಾಳ್ ಪಡಿ ೧ ಊರಿಅಡಿನಾಳ್ ಪಡಿ ೧ ಕಾರ್ತಿಕೈ ನಾಳ್ ಪಡಿ ೧ ದೀಪಳಿಕೈನಾಳ್ ಪಡಿ ೧	*amāvāsai 13 kku dōsai paḍi 13 śrījayantināḷ paḍi 1* *uṟi'aḍiṉāḷ paḍi 1 kāṟtikai ṉāḷ paḍi 1 **tīpaḷikai**ṉāḷ paḍi 1*

அமாவாசை ௰ க்கு தோசை படி ௰ ஸ்ரீஜயந்திநாள் படி க
உறிஅடினாள் படி க காற்திகை னாள் படி க **தீபளிகை**னாள் படி
க

There are likewise **inscriptions** in ***Tirupati-Tirumala*** from the period of the reign of another **Karnata** (Vijayanagara) emperor ***Venkatapati Raya (Venkata II)*** and in the subsequent period. He ruled **between 1587 and 1614 CE**. This **Tamil** inscription from **1594 CE** records donations to offer various food items to the temple are Tirumala on various festival days including dīpāvaḷi. Alongside the dōse, another dish of kannada origin **iḍḍali (iḍli**) also makes an appearance as an offering.

దీపళిగ్యేనాళ్ తమ్మిడ తోట్టత్తుక్కు ఎళుందరుళి విశేష
తిరుమంజనం కొండరుళి అముదుసెయ్దరుళుం తిరువోలక్కం
தீபளிகைனாள் தம்மிட தோட்டத்துக்கு எழுந்தருளி விசேஷ
திருமஞ்சனம் கொண்டருளி அமுதுசெய்தருளும்
திருவோலக்கம்

***tīpaḷikai**ṇāḷ tammiḍa tōṭṭattukku eḻundaruḷi visēṣa tiru-mañjaṇam koṇḍaruḷi amuduceydaruḷum tiruvōlakkam*

The following **Tamil** inscription found in śrī **gōvindarājaswāmi temple** in **Tirupati** records donation of 1 marakkāl green gram and other food items as offering on **தீவளிகை tīvaḷikai**, utthāna ēkādaśi etc.

మాడపూజె అణ్ణావిన్ కుమారర్ పడి ౧ దీవళిగ్యేనాళ్ ఉత్తాన
ఏకాదశినాళ్ పడి ౧ పయఱముదు ౧ మరక్కాల్
மாடபூஜெ அண்ணாவிந் குமாரர் படி க **தீவளிகை**நாள் உத்தாந
ஏகாதசிநாள் படி க பயற்றமுது க மரக்கால்

*māḍapūje aṇṇāvin kumārar paḍi 1 **tīvaḷikai**nāḷ uttāna ēkādasināḷ paḍi 1 payaṟṟamudu 1 marakkāl*

Another **inscription** from **1594 CE** from the śrī **gōvindarājaswāmi temple** in **Tirupati** documents the donation of 4 paṇa for **dōse**, and 1 paṇa towards 2 nāḻi green gram and 1/4 vīsé jaggery toward the preparation of tiruppaṇiyāram to be offered to Lord gōvindarājaswāmi and his consorts on **தீபாளி .tīpāḷi**. Interstingly, jaggery is called bellam (pellam) as against the Tamil word vellam.

దీపాళిక్కు దోసైప్పడి ౧ క్కు పణం ళ ఉం తిరుప్పణియారం
పయఱు ఇరునాఴి బెల్లం విసై
தீபாளிக்கு டோசைப்படி க க்கு பணம் ச ம் திருப்பணியாரம்
பயறு இருநாழி பெல்லம் விசை

***tīpāḷi**kku ḍōsaippaḍi 1 kku paṇam 4 m tiruppaṇiyāram payaṟu irunāḻi bellam vicai*

Interestingly, the inscriptions from Tirumala-Tirupati noted above record donations by civilians.

Yet another **Tamil inscription** of yet another **Karnata** (Vijayanagara) **king Sadashivaraya** from **1558 CE** in the śrī **Varadaraja Perumal temple in Kanchipuram** records his donations for a **100 festival**s to be celebrated in the temple. **tīvaḷikai** features among them. The full text was unfortunately not available to me.

దీవళిగ్యే తోప్పుత్ తిరునాళ్
தீவளிகை தோப்புத் திருநாள்

***tīvaḷikai** tōpput tirunāḷ*

There are no doubt many more inscriptions in the period subsequent to my study. In fact, I did come across a number of them all the way **down to the 20th century CE**. I have however not dealt with these as the celebration of dīpāvaḷi during these recent historic times is much more well established in our collective memory and cultural footprint.

A Brief Foray into Cultural Aspects

Apart from references in literature and inscriptions, we will also benefit from looking at how deeply embedded dīpāvaḷi is in our culture, and the multitude of ways it is celebrated across regions. Although it is not the focus of this study, let us sample some of these practices for a well-rounded appreciation. Inviting the newly-wed couple to the bride's parental home and treating them with feasts and gifts on the first dīpāvaḷi following the

wedding is a widespread practice across the southern states of India as also in several regions in the north. It is given particular emphasis across communities in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The Halakki tribe of Karnataka celebrates dīpāvaḷi in its own unique way. As part of their celebration, a mock "wedding" is conducted between two men, one of whom is the bride and the other the groom. The rituals are elaborate, involve singing a number of traditional songs, and the worship of cows, alongside merrymaking. In the Kundapura dialect of Kannada, one of the months is named divāḷi. The festival is particularly significant and grand to the farming and cow-herding community in Karnataka. Called haṭṭi habba, some of the ways that mark their celebration is the worship of Goddess Lakshmi as Haṭṭilakkamma, children running around the village with firebrands, young men subduing a bull and taking copra tired to the bull. The festival is celebrated with fervour and grandeur elsewhere too.

In Tamil Nadu, the celebrations in the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai and the Brihadeeshwara temple in Thanjavur are well-known tourist attractions. The celebrations in the Telugu states are also similarly grand. There are in fact two villages in the Srikakulam district of Andhrapradesh, both named dīpāvaḷi. Legend has it that the dīpāvaḷi village in Gara mandal was named so by a long Kalinga in recognition of the villagers' offering aid to him when he once fell unconscious. He is also said to have waived the taxes for the village. Both the villages celebrate the festival with great fanfare over five days. The day of dīpāvaḷi is also of significance to the Sikhs who venerate it as Bandi Chhor divas to mark the release of Guru Hargobind and 52 Hindu princes from Mughal imprisonment in 1619. The celebrations are as in dīpāvaḷi, with lamps, fireworks, worship and feasts.

Whilst we cannot precisely date when many of these practices came into being or into vogue, the fact that these are spread across a wide geographic area and that they are a part and parcel of some events and milestones fundamental to Indian cultural and life suffice to show that these have been around for a long time.

Summary

The intention of this study was to explore and establish the extent of the knowledge, importance and spread of dīpāvaḷI. It is possible that there are a few, even many more inscriptions relevant to this subject matter. Likewise, there maybe further literary evidences in Sanskrit and other languages such as **Telugu** and possibly, **Tamil**. Certainly, a deeper study of literature, particularly **Sanskrit, Prakrit** and other languages, and the exploring of inscriptions in the other major literary languages of India with a considerably long documented history may yield insights that could add to the depth and the breadth of our understanding. Exploring cultural practices across India will no doubt yield rich material to further that understanding.

In summary, the festival of **dīpāvaḷI** has been culturally important from the very early ages of India that is **bhārata**. The earliest literary references are in Sanskrit, from works that were created from all the corners of our country. **After Sanskrit, the earliest literary records emerge in Kannada**. The records in Kannada anticipate those in Tamil and Telugu **by many centuries**. Again, **Kannada epigraphic records abound** not just in the present day area of Karnataka, but also deep in Tamil Nadu and the Telugu states, and especially so in the Tamil lands. Even the **records in the Tamil language inscriptions bear an unmistakable imprint of Karnata influence**. In what I found, there were only a very few inscriptions in Sanskrit relevant to this subject that came to my attention. This should by no means be seen as suggestive of dīpāvaḷi not being of importance in parts where evidence is lacking or sparse.

Owing to the much longer history of writing in the southern (Dravidian) languages of our country as compared to other modern languages, we inevitably see the early evidence emerging overwhelmingly from the southern part of our country. This is further solidified by the fact that over **four fifths of all inscriptions discovered hithero in India are in just two languages- Kannada and Tamil**.

Be that as it may, the reverence with which dīpāvaḷi has been held, and the details of its celebration and the manner in which it has been practised shows an unquestionable cultural continuity spanning the length of time and the breadth of bhārata. The **Sanskrit and Kannada records predate the Islamic invasions and**

incursions into our motherland and influences on our lives. This is one small but important testimony to the **resilience of Indian culture** which is woven into the warp and weft of our daily lives.

Concluded