

26. Onam: the message of sacrifice

Trees yield fruits for the benefit of mankind

without any selfish motive.

Rivers carry water for helping others.

Cows yield milk for the good of others

without any trace of selfishness.

The human body is given for the

purpose of helping others.

EMBODIMENTS of love! The entire cosmos is a stage for the play of the Divine. There should be no feeling of hatred among human beings because both in the individual and the society the Divine Consciousness is present. This Divine Consciousness which is termed as *Chaithanya* is not without purpose. The primary purpose of human birth is to manifest the Divinity within. When man is filled with ego, he indulges in wicked thoughts and actions, while he will do good deeds when he is conscious of the Divinity within. Human life is made up of virtue and vice, hatred and love. The root cause for all troubles is *Raaga* and *Dhvesha* (attachment and hatred). This has plunged humanity in misery since time immemorial.

Man should learn to balance his feelings

Good and bad always: co-exist. Without pain one cannot have the enjoyment of pleasure. Without darkness one cannot feel the value of light. Man should learn to enjoy the dualities of good and bad, pain and pleasure, in moderation. Food consumed in excess causes indigestion. If it is inadequate it results in starvation. Man can even have ego in a limited measure. If he balances his feelings he can have peace and happiness.

Kashyapa and his two wives, Dhithi and Adhithi, were the parents of *Asuras* (demons) and *Dhevas* (demigods). Indhra, the king of *Dhevas* went to war with the king of *the Asuras*, as it was common practice in those days for one king to invade, the kingdom of another to acquire additional territory. Mahaabali vanquished Indhra in the war and proceeded to annexe the territory of Indhra and occupied his capital Amaraavathi. Kashyapa had gone to the Himaalayas to do penance. Lamenting over the defeat of her son, Indhra, Adhithi was in great grief. When she was wailing, Kashyapa came to her. Instantly; he was able to recognise the cause of her grief by divine insight, which he had acquired as a result of his penance. He consoled his wife Adhithi saying that nothing happens in the world without God's will and people should go on doing their duties. He asked her to pray to Lord Naarayana and taught her a *Vratha* (ritual) to be followed strictly, known as *Payovratha* (milk ritual). It has to be observed from the twelfth day of the bright half of *Kaartheeka* (*Shuklapaksha Dhvaadhasi*). She observed the *matha* as pre-scribed. A devotee's sincere prayer will never go waste. Since she carded our the *vratha* with a pious heart, Naarayana appeared before her and informed her that He would Himself take birth in her womb and help Indhra. Adhithi was very happy and true to the word of the Lord, she gave birth to a son of uncommon effulgence on the twelfth day of the bright half of the month of Bhaadrappaadha. That child was Vaamana muurthi. Even as a child He demonstrated His Divine power by doing marvellous deeds.

Vaamana approaches emperor Bali

Mahaabali was performing an *Ashvamedha Yajna* (horse sacrifice). He had previously performed a hundred such *yajnas*. He declared that he would give anything that anyone sought from him during this *yajna*. Vaamana came to the *Yaagashaala*. As He was approaching them, the sages assembled there perceived the extraordinary effulgent form of the young lad. Mahaabali went forth to receive the *Brahmana* boy with all traditional honours and gave him an eminent seat befitting the status of a holy person. Bali told him: "Master, it is my good fortune that you have chosen to honour me with your presence. Whatever you desire, I am here ready to fulfill the same." Vaamana smiled and said: "You need not give me anything very great. It is enough if you give me that extent of land covered by three foot-steps of mine."

On hearing him, Bali's preceptor, Shukraachaarya, who could have vision of the future, told Bali that the one who had come to seek a gift from Bali was not an ordinary *Brahmana* boy but Lord Naarayana Himself who had assumed this form. He advised Bali not to promise the lad anything. But Bali was a king who would never go back on his word and told his *Guru* that he would never break his promise. He was determined to give Vaamana whatever he wanted since breaking one's word was a sin and he had to keep his pledge. Shukraachaarya insisted that he should not fulfill the demand of Vaamana as He had come to deprive Bali of all his possessions. He said Vaamana was not really in need of anything as everything was in his hands.

Bali, however, determined to honour the word given to Vaamana, begged pardon of his *Guru* for disregarding his advice. Earlier, while Bali was embarking on the war with Indhra, he had prostrated at the feet of his preceptor, Shukraachaarya, and on his advice he performed the *Vishvajith Yajna* from which he secured very powerful weapons. It was only because of Shukraachaarya's help that he was able to conquer Indhra. On this occasion, Bali was not prepared to heed the advice of the same preceptor. Shukraachaarya cursed Bali, saying: "As you have not heeded your *Guru's* words you will be reduced to ashes." Bali was firm and replied- "I am prepared to face any consequence, but will not go back on my word."

So saying, he told Vaamana to measure the three feet of land as desired by him. All attempts of Shukraachaarya to dissuade Bali from offering the land desired by Vaamana proved futile. Bali told his *Guru*: "*Praana (life) and Maana (honour)* are the two eyes of a person. Even if life goes, honour should be protected. Granting that the person that has come now is the Lord Himself, I should be the most fortunate one as the Lord who gives everything to mankind, is seeking something from me."

Bali was an example of supreme sacrifice. He sacrificed all his possessions and himself too to God. Bali said: "The hand of the Lord, which gives *Abhaya* (graceful benediction) to all has been stretched to take something from me. The Lord's hand is below while my hand is above. This must be the fruit of my penance in several births. I am prepared for anything." This was the spirit of Bali. Bali was also a very good ruler, who was much concerned about the welfare of his subjects. He was the son of Virochana and grandson of Prahlada. They were both devotees of Naarayana. Is there any one who has perished having believed in God? There might be people who have perished without belief in God.

Only by sacrifice one can attain immortality

Prahlaadha was happy and appreciated the good fortune of his grandson Bali when Naarayana himself sought a gift from him. He blessed Bali that he had kept up the noble tradition and name of the family. It is only by sacrifice that one can attain immortality and not by any other means.

Shukraachaarya's anger was growing because of his selfish motive that he should continue to be the preceptor of the *Asuras*, He did not want Bali, to give the gift sought by Vaamana as he was sure that the last vestige of power of the *Asuras* would be destroyed by Vaamana. Earlier when a fierce battle was raging between Indhra and Bali, Indhra used his *Vajrayudha* (thunderbolt) against Bali. The latter hinted. There was one Asura, Namuuchi by name. The *Vajrayudha* could not be effective against him. An ethereal voice said, "Namuuchi is very powerful. As he has Brahma's boon, nothing will affect him. Only a weapon that is neither wet nor dry will be effective." Indhra looked at the ocean and recognized that the foam was neither wet nor dry. He applied the foam to his weapon and attacked Namuuchi. Namuuchi fell down.

Ekaagratha is mightier than any weapon

Indhra is hailed as the chief of the gods. In the *Purushasuktha*, it is said that out of the face of the cosmic *Purusha* emerged Indhra. Indhra is one who is the Lord of the senses. In man, the mind is the master of the senses. No one can estimate the power of the mind. *Brahmaasthra* and *Vajrayudha* are not more powerful than *Ekaagratha* (concentration) which is mightier than any weapon. For this, sense control is essential. There is always a battle raging in the body between vice and virtue and only the one that has *Ekaagratha* can come out victorious.

Bali is the symbol of *Thyaaga* (sacrifice). He controlled everything by his spirit of sacrifice. The *Gaayathri manthra* begins with the utterance: "*Bhur-Bhuvas-Svaaha*." These represent the three worlds which are in the body itself. *Bhur* represents *Prakrithi* (Earth), which is the physical body. Mind is *Bhuvvarloka*. *Prajnaana* (spiritual awareness) is *Suvarloka*. Body represents materialisation as it is made up of the five physical elements. The mind is Vibration and *Prajnaana* is Radiation. If you enquire into their inner significance, all the three are in your body itself. The battle between Bali and Indhra represents the mind battling to control the senses. When the mind is controlled one attains Divinity. This is the spiritual state. Bali performed many sacrifices to attain this state.

Bali means tax. You pay taxes to the Government for electricity, water, drainage, etc. What tax did Bali pay? He gave all his possessions, body, mind and soul, to the Lord. The Lord's first foot covered this world and the second foot covered the other world. How huge the Lord's feet would have been to cover the whole world? How can such a huge foot be kept on Bali's head for the third step of land? The inner significance of this action is that Lord entered Bali's body, mind and soul. Once the ego or body consciousness is surrendered, there is no bar to one's realisation. It is the body consciousness that stands in the way and makes you forget God. Vaamana opened Bali's eyes to help him realise Divine. The imprisoned man had to be freed. Bali offered his body, mind and soul, to the Lord.

Bali performed supreme surrender to the Lord

Kerala is a sacred land where Bali performed this action of supreme surrender to the Lord. He had good relationship with this people and they loved him in turn, and had faith in him. That is why Kerala is still fertile and prosperous. The Lord goes about freely in this land.

Bali sought a boon from the Lord that he should visit Kerala every year, on this day of *Shravana* asterism in the month of *Shraavan*. This day is celebrated as *Onam* by Keralites. They have been following this faithfully, since ancient times. This day is considered most important for the people of Kerala. They prepare many dishes and eat together on this holy day.

We should appreciate the spirit of sacrifice of the devotees from Kerala who sacrifice the comforts of their homes and the company of their near and dear ones and make a pilgrimage to this place, to celebrate this festival in the immediate presence and company of Svaami. They do not mind the inconveniences and lack of comforts here. They reflect the spirit of sacrifice demonstrated by Mahaabali even to-day. It is My blessing that you should enjoy this and should never give up your love of God. God's love is permanent while all other love among human beings is only transient and temporary.

Because this faith is imprinted strongly in the minds of Keralites you are making your trip to this place leaving your own native place with your unstinted devotion to Svaami. It is My wish that other States should emulate your example. People may brand Kerala as dominated by Communist doctrine but I am sure the people of Kerala are filled with pure devotion to God, whatever may be their political afflictions.

I bless you all to cherish this pure love and devotion always.

Discourse in the Puurnachandhra Auditorium on 16-9-1994, Onam Day.

Adoration of God has to be through one name and one form; but, that should not limit your loyalty to that particular form only.

BABA