

## 20. God knocks, asks and gives

THE name that is applied to the Festival celebrated with great joy by Keralites this day, Onam, is derived from the Samskrith *Shraavanam* and *Shronam*, indicating the ascendant star of the day. The month too is *Shraavanam*. That word reminds people of the very first step in spiritual *saadhana*, the first of the famous nine, namely, listening to the Glory of God and imbibing joy therefrom.

Keralites believe that the Lord, who incarnated as Vaamana, and Emperor Bali, who was immortalised by the Grace of that *Avathaar*, bless that region of Bhaarath this day by their Presence together. In every home, They are worshipped with flowers and incense, ritual offerings, song, dance and folk sports. Tradition declares that the Emperor prayed for the chance to re-visit the area he ruled over and loved and he insisted that the Lord who led him into Self-realisation must lead him. This faith is being rewarded every year. Many do achieve the vision of both Vaamana and Bali, there as well as elsewhere.

Bali was an *Asura* by birth but he emulated his father, Virochana, who had risen to great spiritual heights through deeds of self-sacrifice and his grand-father, Prahlaadha, one of the foremost devotees of the Lord. He ruled over his vast empire with vigilant care and affection. His subjects were healthy, happy and filled with gratitude. People were so prosperous and holy that there was not even a single person in want in the entire realm.

### **The *Guru* should practise what he teaches**

He was engaged in an elaborate *Yajna*, (*Vedhic ritual* sacrifice) under the guidance of his *Guru* (preceptor), Shukraachaarya, where he was giving away to *Pandiths* and priests land, homes, cattle and gold when the Lord appeared at the place as a young dwarfish mendicant *Braahmana*, named Vaamana. Bali tempted Him with gifts of dominion, riches and power, but Vaamana asked only for a patch of space, as much as could be measured by three steps of His feet.

The Emperor's preceptor realised that the mendicant was the Lord Himself and that the three steps will encompass Bali's empire and beyond. He warned his disciple of the disaster that would ensue. He tried personally to prevent the gift, by entering the spout of the vessel used by the Emperor to conclude the rite of gifting. When a bunch of blades of grass was inserted into the spout to clear the obstruction, Shukraachaarya lost the eye which was pricked by the bunch. Teaching and practising what he preaches are the two eyes of the *Guru*. Shukraachaarya taught but did not himself honour his teaching. So, the loss of the eye was highly symbolic.

The "three feet" of space that the Lord wished to accept and sanctify after magnifying Himself into *Thrivikrama* (Three-fold conqueror), are often identified as the Earth, Space and Outer-space, the *Bhuuloka*, the *Bhuvvarloka* and the *Suvarloka*. But, the Lord, who has projected the Cosmos by His own will, does not crave for a fraction of His own creation. Nor are the three *lokas* situated one over the other. They are regions of consciousness, existing contemporaneously in Bali and everyone else. When you pay attention to the *Lokas*, the individual personality does not impinge on your attention; when the individual personality is cognised, the *Lokas* recede from view.

### **When the heart is pure, the Lord resides therein**

When you look upon this chair as chair, you are not aware of the word; when you observe the word, the chair passes out of view. Take the instance of the idol of Shirdhi Sai Baba in silver.

When you adore it as Sai Baba, you are not aware of the silver; when you know it as so much silver, you exclude Sai Baba. So, too, when man concentrates on the *Bhuuloka* in him, the other two are beyond cognition.

The *Bhuuloka* in man is the *Dhehaloka* (the physical home of body which he carries about and in which he resides). The *Bhuvarloka* in him is the *Praanaloka* (the vital equipment or sheath that activates the *Bhuuloka* and the principle of consciousness encased therein) and the *Suvarloka* is the inner treasure chest, the *Aanandha* (delight), which prompts by its very presence the spiritual bud to blossom. Vaamana sought Bali's willing acquiescence in the Divine Process of purifying and sanctifying these three levels of his being-- the Body, the Awareness and the Cosmic Essence. Vaamana spoke of this blessing, symbolically, as three 'foot- measures' of land!

And, Bali, unaware of the inner meaning, agreed to give Vaamana what obviously He wanted. He was indeed in great ecstasy at the unique chance to offer to the Lord what He claimed out of what He had himself given!

Vaamana assumed His Cosmic Form and measured the three steps, covering the Cosmos, including Bali. Bali surrendered totally to the Divine Will; he was amply rewarded. He lived up to the heritage handed down to him by his father Virochana and grandfather Prahlada. *The Bhaagavatha Puraana* declares that he was consigned to *Suthala*, the most sacred of the nether regions. In other words, Bali was blessed with an inner vision of the Lord in his heart. The Lord assured him that He would grant him His constant presence in the *Suthala* region. The Message of Onam is that the Lord is won by means of total surrender of the ego. When the heart is pure, the Lord resides therein and guides man to Himself.

*Prashaanthi Nilayam, 7-9-1984*

*Prayer has great efficacy. The Vedhic seers prayed for the peace and happiness of all mankind, of all animate and inanimate things. Cultivate that Universal vision.*

*Sri Sathya Sai*