

## 47. Mahaabali

*What does 'incarnating' mean?*

*It is God appearing on earth*

*Filled with affection and love*

*For mankind, everywhere---*

*Divine Consciousness in human form.*

Bhaarath has gained wide renown through many sons and daughters who have sacrificed their all for the common good. The seed has to renounce its identity and become one with the soil so that the tree might emerge. So too, the ego has to sacrifice itself so that man's divine nature can manifest itself. *Mama ithi mrithyu---*"mine" is death; 'not mine' is immortality. *Thyaagah shaanthih anantaram---* Renunciation results in peace. The golden key of non-attachment opens the lock which keeps the door to heaven shut. "Give up; I shall fill the gap," says Jesus.

Today, renunciation has become a means for success and fame! It has become a bargaining point. Renouncing animal and even human failings and earning the awareness of the Divine which is the core, is the most valuable *saadhana*. Consider the heroes of renunciation in the past; they were mostly rulers and the rich, who could afford power and plenty---Emperor Sibi, Emperor Mahaabali, King Karna. Consider also later heroes---Thanaaji and Bhagath Singh. These two sacrificed their lives for the sake of the nation and the world.

Mahaabali, the *asura* (demon) ruler, renounced everything for the sake of God. His father and grandfather were also very famous for the same reason. The great grand-father, Hiranyakashipu, did not tolerate the very mention of the name Hari. For he swore that he was himself God! He was a fanatical rationalist. And, he had a son named Prahlada who was devoted to Hari and whose dedication and surrender to God was complete, without any reservation. He came out triumphantly through travails and tortures. The name Hari, was the armour that saved him from the shafts of angry hatred aimed by his father. The persons who tortured him in obedience to his father's command were struck at the calm heroism and the utmost peace he enjoyed as a consequence of his steady repetition of the Lord's name.

### **Truth of God's incarnation as Vaamana**

His son was Virochana. He ruled this Kingdom righteously and he became popular and famous on account of his gifts to the poor and the learned. Mahaabali was Virochana's son. He celebrated the efficacious and complicated *yajna* named *Vishwajith* (Cosmic Victory) and as a result, he became the Lord of Heaven, displacing Indra! While Mahaabali ruled over the world, no one suffered from hunger and thirst; no one had fear or anxiety; the earth yielded rich harvests; people had holy thoughts and intentions.

God willed at that time to teach the world the valuable lesson---renounce and win. The ocean collects all the rivers and is always receiving offerings. It does not give up pearls and corals of its own free will; it hides them from gaze and gives out only shells. Its waters cannot quench thirst; it only inflames thirst. But the cloud is anxious to give itself fully as rain; so it rises high while the ocean lies at the lowest level. God decided also to grant salvation to Bali, for he had become worthy of that supreme gift. He had, through his good actions purified his mind; he had through

his devotion realised the Divinity in every being and he had achieved the wisdom which could liberate him from illusion.

### **Meaning of three steps Vaamana demanded**

It is generally believed that God incarnated as Vaamana in order to uproot the ego of Bali. This is not the truth. The incarnation had as its purpose the conferment of the boon of liberation. For, Bali had no inkling of ego in him. When Vaamana asked for "three feet of ground" from him, his *Guru* tried his best to prevent him from giving it to Vaamana. "My dear fellow! This is no ordinary mendicant. He is God Naaraayana Himself. If you agree to give Him what he asks for, you are certain to be mined!" But, Emperor Bali replied, "Whoever it be, he has asked and giving what is asked is my duty. It is my great good fortune that God Naaraayana has come, with hands extended to receive a gift from me. I shall not listen to your teachings now." "The hand that gives is on top of the hand that receives. This is indeed unique luck," he said.

And the mendicant was the Trinity in ONE, requiring THREE feet of ground. The three steps are the physical (*Aadhibhowthic*) the mental (*Aadhidaivic*) and the spiritual (*Adhyaathmic*). The first two steps covered earth and sky and for the third, Emperor Bali's heart was the most appropriate gift! Since the heart was offered to God Naaraayana, his body sank *into paathaala* (the Nether Regions). The first two steps mean the identification with the body and the mind was eliminated. (*Shaanthi* is uttered thrice at the end of every *bhajan* (group singing) session or ceremonial rite to invoke peace of body, mind and spirit, all three).

Bali had achieved the stage of total surrender. His heart, mind and intelligence were the Lord's. He had dedicated the results of all his actions to God. The 'I' in him had been displaced by 'He'. He had realised the triviality of worldly power and decided to give up every desire except the longing for the Lord. Through his sacrifice, the sins of his great grandfather, Hiranyakashipu, were washed away. The entire dynasty was sanctified. The three flowers of that clan---Prahlaadha, Virochana and Bali saved him.

Bali alone had the resources and the renunciation to give the Lord what he solicited. That is the reason why the Lord approached him. There are many in history who have renounced their wealth and even their lives. There are many who have given away gems, houses and land. But, Bali surrendered all and also himself.

### **Surrendering one's life is great *saadhana***

Emperor Shibi saved a dove from being eaten by a vulture but the vulture claimed flesh equal to the weight of the bird. He cut out from his own body an equal weight of flesh, but, the dove appeared to be too heavy to be weighed against even the biggest slice. So, he sat himself on the pan, and gave himself up as food for the vulture. Thanaaji heard the call to fight for his country, even while he was on the floral seat at the wedding ceremony. He plunged into battle clothed as the bridegroom! He died, happy that he had done his duty to his family, his community and his country. Bhagath Singh ascended the gallows, full of joy that he was able to offer his life for the liberation of his motherland. Bhaarath had millions of such sons and daughters who sacrificed their lives for Her sake.

But, these days, we do not notice spirit of *thyaaga* (sacrifice). We find only *raaga* and *bhoga*---*attachment* and enjoyment. *Thyaaga* alone can promote *yoga*. It is indeed the good fortune of the people of Kerala State that they adore the personality and ideals of Mahaabali every year during

the ONAM festival. We have to celebrate the festival not only with feast and song but also with acts of sacrifice, charity and renunciation.

The *saadhana* of *thyaaga* involves the elimination of the feelings of I and Mine. The 'I' will persist so long as we are embodied, but one has to minimise its hold on thought, word and deed.

### **Be like Mahaabali to earn God's blessings**

So long as man is bound to the body, his God too has to be in a body like his own, It is often said disparagingly that God is conceived as having eyes, nose, tongue and limbs. When the person who worships has these, the worshipped too must have them, in order to make the worship meaningful. Only when one is unaware of his 'form,' can he adore the Formless! it is indeed surprising that those who laugh at God being pictured as having a body, do not laugh at their being enclosed in a body! When man has to be corrected and liberated, God has to come as Man, as Naaraayana had to do to save Mahaabali.

Bali had understood the glory and majesty of God. He told his *Guru*, "The Hand that grants boons to countless devotees, that Hand is stretched to receive what I offer in answer to the Lord's desire. That Hand has all the worlds in its grasp. And, what does the Lord wish to get from me? He is asking only for that which He has given me! He has come to me in this Form to ask from me all that I have because, the same is what He has given me." Bali had convinced himself that the Lord gives and the Lord takes, that he is but an instrument, that his destiny is to merge in the Lord.

So, on this festival day, when we celebrate his dedication and renunciation, we must strengthen our faith that God's will must prevail and is prevailing over all human effort. And, we must realise that *thyaaga* is the highest *saadhana*. Be like Prahladha and Bali. Do not be Hiranyakashipu, for these are blinded by egoism. Prahladha and Bali received blessings from God. Hiranyakashipu earned curses. Pray to God; let prayer be your breath. Do not conflict with God and be cursed. Take this as the message on this ONAM Day.

*Prashaanthi Nilayam, 1- 9-1982.*

*Traits like modesty and devotion to God  
are real jewels for womankind.*

*Women preserve the traditional  
values of a culture and  
keep the nation on an even keel.*

*A woman is honoured as the  
Goddess of Wealth in a home,  
as the companion in the pilgrimage  
towards God and Self-realisation and  
as the mistress of the home.*

*If the women of a*

*country are happy, healthy and holy,  
the men of the Country will be  
hardy, honest and happy.*

Sathya Sai Baaba