

22. The ego and the Avathaar

BHAAGAVATH represents the essence of all the *shaasthas* (spiritual sciences), the truth proclaimed by all the *Vedhas* (ancient revealed scriptures) and the goal to be aimed at. *Bhagah* means the omnipotence of Divinity. It also means That which is worthy of worship and meditation. *Bha* means effulgence. *Ga* means Making it shine. *Va* means all-pervasive. Another meaning of *Bhagah* is *Sambhartha* and *Bhartha*. *Sambhartha* is one who creates the Cosmos out of *Prakrithi* (Nature). "*Bhartha*" is the Protector of the created universe. Creation and protection are both covered by the term "*Bhagavath*." Not only all material things in creation, but also all qualities like fame, knowledge, honour, health, charity and sacrifice are properties of the *Aishwarya* (Divine).

Emperor Bali, the grandson of Prahladha, was the repository of all great qualities. He was a righteous ruler. There was no want in his realm. On the advice of his *Guru* (preceptor), Sukraachaarya, he performed the *Viswajith Yagna* and became the ruler of the world. When he wanted to conquer Indhraloka (the Kingdom of Indhra), Indhra got frightened and sought Vishnu's help to save him. Vishnu came to Bali as a Braahmana lad, Vaamana, and sought from him the gift of three feet of land. Bali readily agreed to make the gift despite warnings from his guru that the person to whom he was making the offer was Lord Vishnu Himself. Bali felt that if the Lord of the Universe came to him for a gift, there was no greater honour for him than to give it.

Immediately the dwarfish Vaamana grew to cosmic proportions. By his first foot, he covered the earth. By his second foot he covered the heavens. He then asked Bali wherefrom he should get the third foot of ground. Bali begged the Lord to place His foot on his head.

Vaamana Avathaara is the Divine principle in man

While Emperor Bali felt supremely happy that the Lord's sacred foot had been placed on his head, Sukraachaarya was burning with anger. He was the kind of *guru* who did not practise what he preached. Hence he had only one eye. Bali was greater than his guru because he practised what he believed in. He was a true devotee of the Lord. He had only one defect--pride in his greatness. The Lord blessed him by destroying his ego.

This ego exists in every human being. As long as it remains, man cannot achieve anything good, nor secure God's grace. Bali shed his ego when he told the Lord that he had no more land to give after the Lord had measured the earth and heaven' by two steps and that he was offering himself for the third step. "My ego had warped my mind. Lord, destroy that ego by placing your redeeming foot on my head," he said. The Lord by placing his foot on Bali and pressing him down to the nether world destroyed also his ego and thereby sanctified him.

The three worlds penetrate each other

The place where the Lord assumed the Cosmic form (*Trivikrama*) is known as *Siddhaashrama*. This *siddhaashrama* is in every human being. The intelligence in man is his spiritual essence. The Vaamana *avathaara* is the divine principle in man. The ego arising out of man's consciousness represents Bali. The navel in which Divinity resides is the *Siddhaashrama*. It is called *Siddhaasrama* because it is the place where all aspirations are realised.

The three feet of ground Vaamana sought from Bali are: *Bhuuloka, Bhuvarloka and Suvarloka*. *Bhuuloka* means the entire world constituted by the five senses and the five vital airs.

Bhuvarloka represents the subtle life force that is present in the atmosphere enveloping the world. It is the world of *Praana* (Life-force). *Suvarloka* is the *Aathma* (divine soul), the consciousness which permeates everything from the atom to the vastest thing in the Cosmos. These three worlds are not one upon the other. They inter-penetrate each other the *Suvarloka* permeates the *Bhuvarloka* and the latter penetrates the *Bhuuloka*. The three worlds represent symbolically the three bodies of man the gross body, the mental body and the causal body.

Man must move forward from the gross body to the mental path and from the mental to the *Aathmic* State (Self-realisation). The inner meaning of the Onam celebration is that man must destroy the ego and achieve Self-realisation.

Onam Day at Prashaanthi Nilayam, 22 August 1983