

bali to his capital, where Śukrācārya (their teacher-priest Sukra) brought him to life again by the help of sacred herbs. Mahābali instantly waged another war, fiercer than the previous ones, with the devas, and having defeated them, he drove them out of their realm and brought it under control. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 8).

5) *The curse of Prahlāda*. As the whole of heaven came under the sway of Bali, the devas began to leave the country one by one. Everybody was happy and comfortable under the rule of Bali. But the devas and Brāhmaṇas were denied the privileges they deserved. They approached Viṣṇu and represented their grievances. Viṣṇu told them thus : "Bali is devoted to me. Still, to redress your grievances I shall take the incarnation of Vāmana shortly."

In course of time the Asuras and their countries began to be weakened. Seeing the approach of destruction emperor Bali became thoughtful. He approached Prahlāda to learn the reason. Prahlāda told Bali thus : "Lord Viṣṇu is now staying in the womb of Aditi for his incarnation as Vāmana. That is why the country and the Asuras are subjected to destruction. Hearing this Mahābali said : "Our Rākṣasas are more powerful than that Viṣṇu." Hearing these haughty words of Bali, Prahlāda got angry and cursed Bali "Let your country be destroyed." Bali requested Prahlāda to pardon him. Prahlāda advised Bali "You will get salvation only by relying on Viṣṇu". (Vāmana Purāṇa 77).

6) *Defeated by Vāmana*. The defeated devas had taken refuge in forests. Aditi the mother of the devas was very sorry at this. She shed tears before her husband Kaśyapa Prajāpati, who advised his wife to take a fast of twelve days, and taught her the rules and rituals of the fast. Accordingly she took the fast, Viṣṇu appeared before her and asked her what boon she wanted. She requested Viṣṇu to take birth as her son, to drive away Bali and to restore her sons, the devas (gods), to their kingdom of heaven. Mahāviṣṇu agreed.

Aditi became pregnant and gave birth to the son Vāmana. He was an incarnation of Mahāviṣṇu. [The 5th incarnation (avatāra) of Viṣṇu].

At this time Mahābali was performing a sacrifice on the bank of the river Narmadā. Vāmana came to the place of sacrifice in the dress of a hermit boy and told Mahābali that he was a helpless hermit boy and requested that he might be given three steps of ground. Mahābali was pleased with the boy and told him that he was willing to give the boy even the country called Bhr̥ngāraka and that he was prepared to forego the kingly pleasures for the boy. The hermit boy did not show any desire for them. So many gathered round them to witness this sight. The teacher Śukrācārya called Mahābali and said that the boy was a cheat and that his request should not be granted. But Mahābali decided to grant the wish of the boy and as a token of his gift he began to offer the boy water from a waterpot. Then the teacher got into the mouth of the pot in the shape of a mote and water would not flow freely out of the mouth of the pot. Knowing this Vāmana took a grass of Darbha and pushed it at the mouth of the pot. The grass pierced one eye of Śukrācārya. From that time onwards Śukrācārya had only one eye. Water flowed freely into the hands of Vāmana. Sukra got angry and cursed Bali. Vāmana began to measure the ground and simultaneously began to grow. The asuras who were

horrified at this, began to attack Vāmana with anything they could lay hands on. Still Vāmana was growing. Finally he became an immensely large being. With one step he measured the whole of earth and with the second step he took the whole of heaven. Then he asked Bali, where to place the third step. Mahābali said that he had only his body left, as his own, and that Vāmana might take it and complete three steps. Vāmana placed his foot on the head of Bali and pushed him down to Pātāla (the Netherworld). Thenceforward the asuras became the inhabitants of Pātāla. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 8).

7) *Bali and Rāvaṇa*. Once Rāvaṇa visited Bali who was under custody in Pātāla, and said to him, "I have come to save you from here. So get yourself free from the custody of Mahāviṣṇu, with my help." Hearing this, Bali asked Rāvaṇa to fetch the two earrings of Hiranyakaśipu, which were shining like blazing fire a little away from them. Rāvaṇa moved forward to take them. But he fell unconscious. Bali caused him to recover and said : "These earrings were worn by my great grandfather Hiranyakaśipu. How could you, who are not even capable of taking his earrings, save me from his slayer, Viṣṇu? Viṣṇu is Almighty and All-powerful and Supreme Lord of everything." Hearing this, Rāvaṇa was filled with shame and he returned. (Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Uttara Kāṇḍa, Prakṣipta Sarga).

8) *Bali born as a Gardabha (Ass)*. Bali, who was fallen from power took birth in the womb of an ass and roamed about. Brahmā instructed Indra to find out Bali. (M.B., Śānti Parva, Chapters 216-218).

9) *Other information*.

(1) Mahābali shines in the durbar of Varuṇa. (M.B., Sabhā Parva, Chapter 9, Stanza 12).

(2) Once Mahābali went to Prahlāda and repented of his sins and begged for pardon. Then he began to make enquiries on spiritual matters. (M.B., Vana Parva, Chapter 28, Stanza 3).

(3) From his childhood Mahābali was a hater of the Brāhmaṇas. (M.B., Śānti Parva, Chapter 90, Stanza 24).

(4) Once Mahābali was engaged in a serious contest with Indra. (M.B., Śānti Parva, Chapter 223).

(5) After having lost his kingdom Mahābali ridiculed Indra in various ways. (M.B., Śānti Parva, Chapter 225, Stanza 30).

(6) Once Mahābali talked with Śukrācārya about giving gifts of flower, smoke and light. (M.B., Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 98, Stanza 15).

(7) Lakṣmī Devī had forsaken Mahābali because he behaved haughtily towards Brāhmaṇas. (M.B., Śānti Parva, Chapters 216-218).

(8) In the religious Books such as Yogavāsiṣṭha the story of Mahābali is given to illustrate disinterestedness (Anāsakti).

BALI II. A hermit. It is mentioned in the Mahābhārata, Sabhā Parva, Chapter 4, Stanza 10, that this hermit lived in Hastināpura.

BALI III. An incarnation of Śiva. Śiva incarnated in the hermitage of the Bālakhilyas in the mount of Gandhamādana during the period of Varāha Kalpa (Kalpa—one day of Brahmā or the period of 14 manus). It is seen in Śiva Purāṇa, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that Bali had four sons, called Sudhāmā, Kaśyapa, Vasiṣṭha and Virajas.