

and ceremonies of the sacrifice saw Vāmana coming slowly to the sacrificial hall. They wondered whether it was the Sun, Sanat Kumāra or Agni (Fire) coming to see the sacrifice. While they were standing thus, Vāmana with his umbrella, rod and water pot filled with water entered the sacrificial hall. Mahābali welcomed Vāmana and asked him the purpose of his visit. Vāmana said "Oh King! Your words are sweet. Noble Asura! give me three feet of ground which I measure with my feet. That is all what I want."

Mahābali agreed. The teacher-priest Śukra felt some doubts regarding the identity of Vāmana. So he secretly told Mahābali that the boy Vāmana was none other than Mahāviṣṇu and as such, he should not give any promise. But Mahābali had already given the promise. He refused to go back upon his words. The priest Śukra got angry at this and cursed Mahābali thus. "You boast that you are wise and learned. But you are disobedient, slow-witted and unwise. So all your prosperities will be destroyed."

Though he was cursed, he did not deviate from the path of truth. He gave the promised ground to Vāmana by pouring water with the water brought in golden pot by his queen Vindhyāvalī. The names, Aśanā and Kotarā also are used in the Purāṇas for Vindhyāvalī the wife of Mahābali. She came out for the purpose wearing golden ornaments. Mahābali himself washed the feet of Vāmana, who instantly began to grow and became large beyond imagination. Everybody on the spot was amazed at the unimaginable bigness of Vāmana. On that huge figure, Mahābali saw the priest, the performers of sacrificial rites, the sacrificial hall, the universe, the elements, the qualities the senses, the mind, the individual spirits, and at the feet of the figure the world Rasātala. He saw the earth on its feet, mountains below the knees, birds on its knees, the Maruts on its thighs, evening on its clothes, the Prajāpatis on its privities, the noble and mighty asuras on its loins, the sky on its navel, the oceans on its stomach, Dharma (duty) in its heart, rightness and truth on its breasts, Mahālakṣmī holding lotus on its chest, songs of Sāman and all other voices in its neck, all the gods beginning with Indra on its hands, the points (directions) on its ears, the ether on its head, the clouds on its hair, breaths in its nose, the sun in its eyes, fire on its face, the Vedas in its words, Varuṇa in its tongue, day and night agreement and disagreement in its winking and anger on its forehead. In its touch there was desire, in its radiance there was water, in its buttocks lawlessness, sacrifice in its steps, death in its shadow, illusion in its laugh, medicines in its hairs, rivers in its veins, stones in its nails, Brahmā in its intelligence, hermits, devas etc. in its life-breaths. Thus the figure was seen by Mahābali. Vāmana had trodden on the whole of the earth, which was completely under the control of Mahābali, with one foot, filled the whole of the sky with his large body and the four points were filled with his hands. The second step was put on Mahārloka, Janaloka and Tapoloka (three worlds). No spot was left in the universe for a third step.

Vāmana said :—"You have given me three feet of ground. I have measured two feet of ground. Show me the place to measure the third step. I have measured the earth with one step and the heaven with the second step. You have seen it. If you cannot keep your promise

you had better go down to Pātāla." Bali requested him to place the third step on his head. Vāmana placed his foot on the head of Mahābali and thrust him down to Pātāla.

Vāmana brought Indra to the spot and anointed him as the ruler of heaven, in the presence of all the gods and hermits. Indra sent Vāmana with the Lokapālas (Indra, Agni, Yama and Varuṇa) in a divine Vimāna to the world of Viṣṇu. (Bhāgavata Skandha 8).

b) *The second story of the incarnation of Vāmana.* Dhundhu, an asura boy, was born to Kaśyapa by his wife Danu. That asura did penance and pleased Brahmā. He made a request that he should not be killed by Indra and the other gods or anybody else. Brahmā, who was pleased at his penance, gave him the boon he asked. The boy Dhundhu, at the beginning of the fourth Kaliyuga, during the period of Hiraṇyakaśipu, went to heaven and defeating Indra and the other Devas, established his rule there as Indra. The mighty Hiraṇyakaśipu was travelling on the mountain Mandara as an official under Dhundhu.

The defeated and grief-stricken Devas went to the world of Brahmā and lived there. Dhundhu, who knew this, wanted to drive them out of that place also. He requested Śukra, the priest and teacher of asuras, to tell him the means of doing it.

Śukra said, "Devendra was enabled to enter the presence of Brahmā, because he had performed one hundred horse-sacrifices. "Hearing this, Dhundhu, with the permission of the teacher Śukra, began to perform sacrifice in the holy place called Prācīna tīrtha.

Hearing that Dhundhu had begun the horse-sacrifice, Indra and the Devas trembled with fear and, leaving the world of Brahmā, went to the world of Viṣṇu and prayed for protection. Bhagavān came to know of everything and consoled them and sent them back. After this Mahāviṣṇu took the form of a Vāmana and jumped into the Devikājala and lay afloat like a piece of dry wood. Dhundhu and the hermits saw by chance, Vāmana sinking and coming up in the water. They took the Vāmana-Brahmin out of water and asked him how he had fallen in water. Vāmana replied with shiver:—"In the family of Varuṇa there was a Brahmin named Prabhāsa, who was a scholar. I am Gatibhāsa, the younger of his two sons. After the death of father, I requested my brother to divide the property of our father. My brother quoted several rules and said that I was not entitled to get any portion of my father's wealth. I spoke against him and getting angry he caught me by my hair and threw me into the river. It is a year since I, being not able to swim, began to sink and come up in this river. Thus you have seen me here."

The Bhārgavas who were present there, requested Dhundhu thus. "Oh! King of the asuras! Be pleased to give this boy a well-furnished house, servant-maids and plenty of wealth." Hearing this Dhundhu said to Vāmana, "I will provide you with wealth, servant-maids, house, gold, cows, land, clothes etc."

Vāmana humbly said to Dhundhu "Oh Lord! I do not want any wealth. It is my desire for wealth that has brought me to this plight. I request you to give me only three feet of ground."

As soon as the asura-King complied with his request, Vāmana began to grow like the moon. He assumed the