

Message for Tiruvonam, 2002

SWAMI BODHANANDA



Onam is many things to many people - a harvest festival, beginning of the new year, nostalgia for a long lost kingdom of equality and justice, yearly reunion with their most beloved expatriate king-Mahabali, victory of divine piety over earthly might, conquest of ego by the spirit and above all an occasion for fun and celebration.

We take off ten days from our busy schedule, decorate the forefront of our homes with floral designs and worship God (in clay statues) as the ideal king who visits each and every one of his citizens in their homes. For the masses God is a benevolent king, who protects the weak and promotes the good. But goodness alone is not enough. Goodness with out humility is arrogant display of power, a mindless standardization of human values. Who ever has tried that system has failed miserably.

You may make every body equal, but humanity loses individuality in a mass of homogeneity. That is what happened to the ideal of Mahabali. Like the communists and socialists, he forcibly imposed equality, and people lost their quality and creativity and the zest for life. The young brahmachari Vamana by a creative intervention demolished the whole structure of inertia and somber statusquo in which mahabali ruled as the sole decision maker. Vamana came as a humble mendicant wanting only three square feet of land to spread his contemplation-cushion. The mighty Mahabali, secure in his power and glory, condescendingly, but thoughtlessly, granted, even against his teacher's advise, the request. Apparently a good act, but with out circumspection. And the structure which Mahabali constructed over years on the principle of equality and inertia collapsed like a pack of cards, like the erstwhile Soviet Union. What is the message of this ambivalent story? A good king was sent packing to the nether world by a just God for no apparent reason or justification!

There are two messages:

- 1) that power with out humility will not be lasting and
- 2) that equality without freedom for individual enterprise will not be sustainable.

The spiritual message is surrender to God and do your best for the good of others.

Love and hearty Onam Greetings

Swami Bodhananda

Message Sent on August15th, 2002, 12.11am, from
Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA

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