DHRUV



Once upon a time there lived a king called Uttanapada. He had two wives, Suniti and Suruchi, and two sons, Dhruva and Uttama respectively by them. Suruchi was, however the king's favourite wife.

One day the five-year old Dhruva noticed the king fondling Uttama, holding him on his lap. Being a mere child, he too wanted to be caressed by his father. So he ran towards the king. The kind did not however respond with his love for fear of Suruchi. Suruchi held Dhruva back and said in an angry voice, "Dhruva! You do not deserve to sit on the king's lap. Even though you too are his son, you are not born of me. Being a mere boy, you are not aware that you were born of the womb of another woman. If you aspire to sit on the king's lap you have got to worship the Lord and by His Grace, be born of my womb."

Hearing these cruel words, Dhruva ran back to his mother crying aloud, as he found his father sitting unmoved by all that he had heard and seen. Seeing her son weeping disconsolately, the gentle Suniti took him lovingly on her lap. As she had already got the news of the events of the day and of the words which Suruchi uttered, she consoled Dhruva thus: "My son, Bear no ill- will towards others. Whoever causes distress to others, reaps the fruit of it afterwards in the shape of suffering. So do not grieve, my beloved son. Suruchi has spoken rightly when she asked you to worship the Lord. Accept without any ill-will this advice of your step-mother. Worship the Lord Vishnu if you desire to be seated on the lap of a king like Uttama. I can think of none but Lord Vishnu to assuage your grief."

Hearing the mother's meaningful words and controlling his emotion, Dhruva left his father's city and proceeded to the forest. Being all-knowing, the sage Narada knew what had prompted the boy to leave the place. In order to test his sincerity, Narada told him, "Happiness and unhappiness in life are due to the good and bad deeds and thoughts of the past. So a wise man who has faith in God should feel satisfied with every happening,

deeming it the Lord's will. To obtain the grace of the Supreme Lord is difficult for ordinary people. Even great sages who have given up all worldly attachments and who worship Him constantly fail to understand Him. You are too young to take to this arduous life now. You can try again in due course after you reach the proper age."

Dhruva replied, "Oh Sage, your advice does not satisfy me. Please show me the way right now to attain the most excellent place in all the three worlds which even my ancestors could not attain."

Narada was pleased with Dhruva's words, indicating the firmness of his resolve to gain the grace of the Lord. He then said, "To attain such a state, worship Bhagavan Vasudeva (Vishnu) with your heart totally dedicated to Him, since attainment of anything in this world is possible only by worshipping Him. Therefore, my dear boy, go to Madhuvana on the bank of the Yamuna where the presence of the Lord is felt at all times. Bathing in that river three times a day repeat ceaselessly the Mantra which I will now impart to you. It is sacred as well as secret. Concentrate on His beautiful form, with His four hands holding the Conch, the Discus, the Mace and the Lotus. Along with this meditation, offer to Him in an image pure water, flower garlands, fruits and roots of the forest as well as the sacred Tulasi leaves." Narada then initiated Dhruva in the mantra of twelve letters (Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya). Dhruva then prostrated before the holy sage and departed for Madhuvana.

On the boy's departure, the sage Narada went to the palace of Uttanapada where he was worshipped, honoured and comfortably seated. Then he asked the king why he was sorrowful. The king replied, "Oh great sage, being henpecked, I have become cruel and merciless, compelling my five year old son Dhruva of noble mind and great intelligence to leave my kingdom. Will wolves not attack and devour that child, perhaps lying somewhere in the forest, helpless, hungry and tried? This is the reason for my great grief."

Narada replied, "Grieve not, oh king. The boy is protected by the Lord as His own son. He is destined to become famous. He will soon return after receiving the grace of God, which even the deities of the eight directions (Ashta dikpalas) cannot attain." The king was thus comforted by the soothing words of Narada.

Meanwhile, the young child, Dhruva, bathed in the Yamuna, fasted for the night and meditated on Lord Vishnu with concentration, repeating the Mantra as instructed by Sage Narada. He spent one month in this way eating only some fruits once in three days. In the second month, he carried on his worship, eating only grass and dry fallen leaves once in six days. Living only on water once in nine days, he spent his third month of worship in continuous meditation. During the fourth month, he lived only on air once in twelve days. During the fifth month, he began standing on one leg absorbed in meditation. He then perceived nothing but the form of the Lord which he was meditating upon. He thereupon concentrated all his mental and physical energies exclusively on the thought of the great Lord Vishnu, as the One pervading all beings. The gods of heaven became alarmed by Dhruva's austerities as the whole earth began to tremble by the power of his meditation.

The gods approached Lord Vishnu and sought refuge in Him. The Lord said, "Be not frightened. I shall take steps to stop the practice of this unheard – of austerity that has

been undertaken by a mere boy, on account of which you are experiencing such fear." The Lord then went to Madhuvana.

Dhruva was then experiencing in his heart the luminous form of the Lord. Now suddenly that form disappeared from his inward vision. Dhruva slowly opened his eyes and to his great surprise found the Lord in that very same form standing before him in person. Happy beyond measure on seeing the beautiful form of the Lord, the boy prostrated before Him. Seeing His enchanting form he felt as if he was drinking Him with his eyes, kissing him with his mouth and embracing Him with his arms.

Overwhelmed by the vision of the Lord, Dhruva could not convey in words to the Lord whatever he wanted to say. Understanding this the Lord touched his cheeks with his conch. Dhruva thereupon became endowed with a divine power of speech and with great devotion began to praise the Lord whose greatness and glory are renowned throughout the universe.

"My salutations to You, the Supreme being, who, having entered my heart, have quickened my dormant limbs and has presently awakened the power of speech with which I can now glorify Your greatness. How can a man of spiritual understanding forget You, who are the source of intelligence and Whose feet constitute the sole shelter for those who seek salvation?

May I always enjoy the association of Your devotees who are absolutely pure in mind and who are ever-engaged in cultivating loving devotion to You.

Oh Lord, to a devotee of yours who is desireless and ever engaged in worship of You, Your feet are the sole object of his quest. He seeks no other boons. Yet, oh Lord, You who are even bent on bestowing Your grace on all, protect the weak and the suffering even as a cow protects its new born calf."

The Lord was pleased with the hearty devotion of Dhruva and said, "Oh royal child, I know your heart's desire. I shall grant you the imperishable and effulgent Dhruvaloka circled by luminous stars, not so far obtained by others. After your father retires to the forest, you will rule his kingdom for 36,000 years and finally you will go to Dhruvaloka, which is beyond the range of birth and death." So saying, the Lord disappeared.

Dhruva then slowly walked back towards his kingdom. When King Uttanapada heard that his son was returning from the forest, he set out in a chariot to greet and welcome Dhruva. Suniti and Suruchi, with Uttama got into palanquins and went with the king. Meeting his son at the outskirts of the city, the king got down from his chariot and embraced Dhruva with great affection. He expressed his love by kissing his son's head again and again. Dhruva respectfully made obeisance to his father. He then made prostrations to Suniti and Suruchi. Thereupon Suruchi lifted up the boy prostrating at her feet and, embracing and shedding tears, wished him a long life. There is no wonder at this change of heart in Suruchi. All beings become affectionate towards one with whom the Lord is pleased. Uttama and Dhruva embraced each other with great mutual affection. When Suniti finally embraced her son she was overwhelmed with joy and all her past sorrows and sufferings instantly vanished.

Dhruva and Uttama were seated on an elephant and taken in a procession to the city. After some years Dhruva was installed as the Emperor. He ruled over the kingdom for a long time and the people were very happy during this period. There was prosperity everywhere.

After his long reign, having realised that this world and its enjoyments are only transitory and the greatest wealth is the holy feet of Lord Vishnu, Dhruva left everything and went to Badarikasrama to remain in continuous contemplation of the Lord. There he immersed himself in the meditation of the Lord and lost all body-consciousness. Then a divine vehicle (Vimana) descended from the sky, illumining all the quarters like the moon. Two of Mahavishnu's attendants got down from the vehicle and said to Dhruva, "Oh king, listen attentively to us. We are the attendants of Mahavishnu. We have come here to take you to Dhruvaloka, bestowed upon you by the grace of the Lord." Dhruva then accompanied them to that world, where he shone like a pure crest-jewel with the entire circle of luminaries revolving around him.