

You Cannot Hoodwink God

Vengrai Parthasarathy

In south India religious discourses go by the name of **Upanyasams**. They differ from **Katha Kalakshepams** which are more in the nature of musical discourse of tales, usually from the Ramayana, Mahabharatha, Bhagavatham, etc., Upanyasams are religious lectures and cover profound moral themes. But they are also interspersed with stories which, apart from making the lectures interesting, drive home some moral principle.

The late Sri P. B. Annangarachariar Swamy, savant of Kancheepuram had a great following as an Upanyasaka and an exponent of Hindu religious philosophy. Here are two tales each with a moral, narrated by him :

There was a businessman (**seth**) whom fortune had treated generously. Goddess Lakshmi had showered on him all the wealth that one could wish for: a good family and a thriving business. He displayed on his left hand a golden ring with a dazzling blue sapphire stone set amidst beautiful diamonds.

One day he found that the finger with the ring had suddenly swollen. The ring was cutting the flesh and hurting him. He tried various systems of medicine but to no avail. He was in great misery.

The seth turned to the **kuladevata** in his village. He took a vow. "If the swelling goes away I vow to offer the ring to your **Hundi**. This is a promise." Lo and behold! The swelling subsided within two days. The ring could be easily pushed in or taken out. His joy knew no bounds. He did special 'poojas' and thanked God. But the vow remaining unfulfilled. Sethji was fond of the ring as he thought that it had brought him good luck. While thus ruminating, he had a brain wave. He got the ring appraised by a reputed jeweller. He told himself : I shall add an equal value and offer it in the form of silver coins to the Lord's Hundi. That way I would be fulfilling the vow and at the same time retaining the ring." So, on an auspicious Friday, he set out with a bag full of silver coins which he deposited with his own hands into the hundi. After he had done it, he

found that the ring had also gone into the hundi along with the coins. Moral : 'You can't hoodwink God. A vow is a vow.'

The second tale is about a woodcutter who led a lonely life of hard toil. Everyday he would go to the forest, slog all day and bring back a head load of wood which he would sell and make just enough to exist. His wife was dead and he had no children. He would drink some porridge and rest his head at high noon. At this time his lament to God was "How long, Oh Lord, this wretched life? When are you going to give me relief and take me to your feet? Oh, when?". It was a daily lament.

One day, after the woodcutter had finished his labour for the day and bundled up the wood, God appeared before him in all his resplendence. He said, "My dear son, what do you want? You have been asking of me every day and here I am to grant your wish." The suddenness of it all astounded the woodcutter. When he finally found the words, he said "Oh Lord, it is nothing. I just wanted someone who could give me a hand to place this heavy bundle on to my head?"

The time for decision had come but the moment had come too soon! Moral : There is time for everything including divine grace.

Bhavan's Journal Subscription

The Bhavan's Journal is published in English on 15th and 30th of each month, i.e. 24 issues a year. 22 ordinary issues are sold at Rs.6/- per copy and two special numbers containing over 240 pages are sold at Rs.15/- per copy

Subscription Rates

	India		Foreign
Single Copy	Rs.6/-	Surface Mail	
One year	Rs.156/-	(All countries one year)	Rs.300/-
Two year	Rs.300/-		
Three year	Rs.350/-	Air Mail	
Five year	Rs.600/-	All countries (One year)	Rs.700/-
Ten years	Rs.1200/-		

Cheque/Draft should be drawn in favour of 'Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan'. Please add Rs.15/- towards Bank charges for cheques drawn outside Bombay.

Circulation Manager,

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan

Kulapati K.M. Munshi Marg, Chowpatty, Mumbai-400 007

Phones: 3631261/3634462