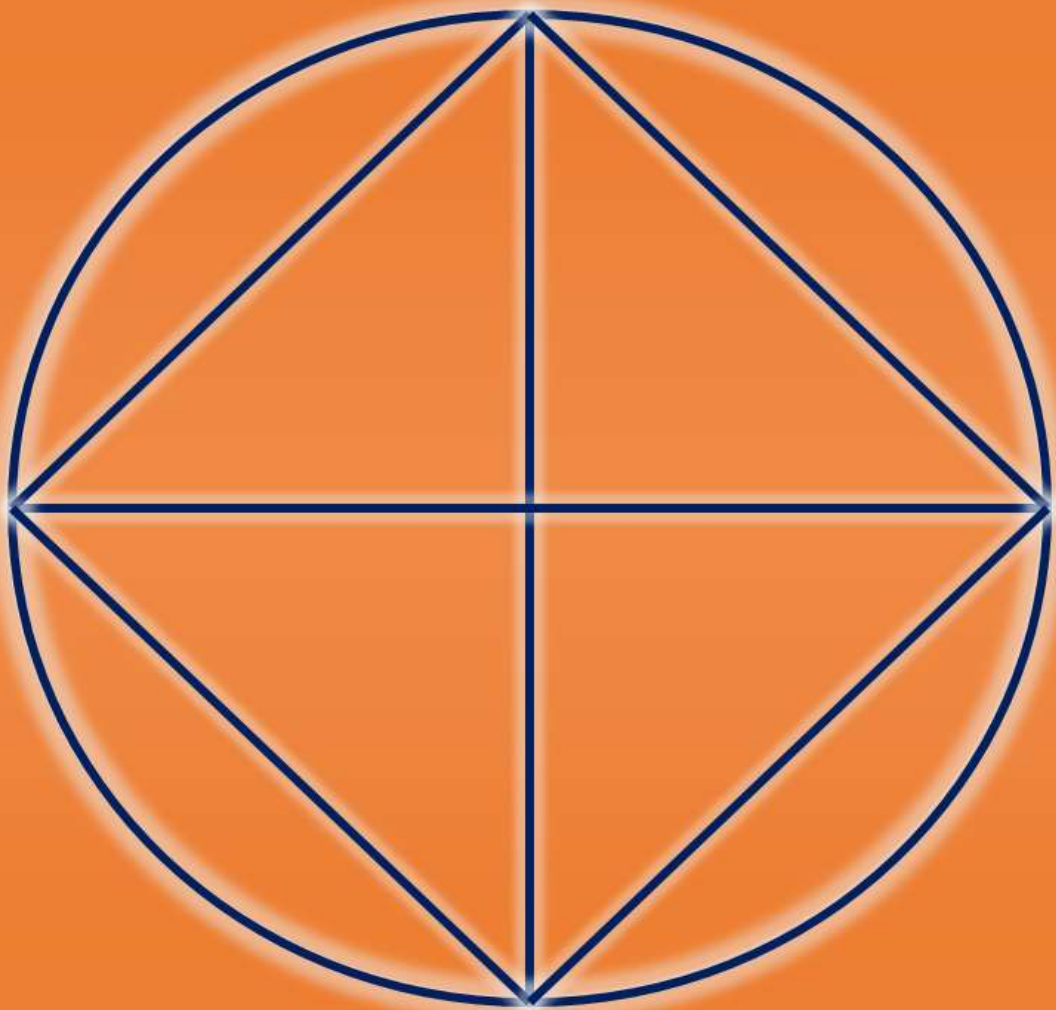


Kulapati Stories



Master E.K.

KULAPATI STORIES

Master E.K.



Master E.K. Book Trust

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IT IS YOUR WIFE

"May the grace of the Lord be upon you." The Sanyasin blessed Shyam who prostrated at the lotus posture of his Guru. The clasped hands of Shyam touched the toes of the Sanyasin while he paid his respect. The Sanyasin was sitting under the peepal tree before his cottage.

Shyam: "Swami, I come to you to receive your blessing so that I may have knowledge of my previous birth."

Sanyasin: "As if the muddle of the present birth is not enough to weigh down your tender mind. Wait. Nature knows better."

Shyam sat down in devotion and begged: "With your grace I want to have it. I know you are capable enough to open my mental dimension to project into my previous birth."

IT IS YOUR WIFE

The Sanyasin smiled as his well-set teeth sparkled through the bushy moustache. With his thumb, he tenderly touched the brow of Shyam and bade him farewell.

Shyam belonged to an orthodox Indian family. He was practising Yoga and meditation with an increasing hope of gaining spiritual powers. He carefully studied the great books of Mahatmas' lives and touched the lotus feet of many a sadhu. Now he feels extremely happy to have received blessing for the knowledge of his past life. He hopes to have the unfoldment in course of time.

The evening is pleasant with a moderately cloudy atmosphere of Indian June. As he walked back into the city, the tall trees of the outskirts leisurely nodded their heads with the whistling sounds of the cool breeze through the foliage.

Shyam is newly married but he feels not much attached to home and his young wife. In fact, he is not much convinced of the faithfulness of a woman. Something suddenly attracted his eye; he suddenly found his wife

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crossing the street a few yards before him. A young stalwart is following her and walking hand in hand with her. "Am I mistaken?" Shyam uttered to himself in a jerk of excitement and walked a little faster. He felt the whole atmosphere like a dream and himself a bit intoxicated. An air of suffocation surrounded him in spite of the gentle breeze that surrounded. The young stalwart was busy in a sprightly conversation with his wife. He was smiling and the wife too! Shyam could not understand his own feelings. He followed them silently as they approached a theatre. It was evident that they were immersed in a programme to enjoy the cinemascope. They purchased tickets, had something to eat at the canteen and entered the theatre. Shyam followed them and was immersed in observing their movements. As the lights were off and the show commenced, Shyam crept in and sat by the side of his wife with a piteous look. She turned close towards the young stalwart sitting on the other side and was busy in her conversation with him. As time passed, Shyam grew puffy with rage. At last, he found it difficult to control himself.

IT IS YOUR WIFE

As his face grew red, he gently addressed his wife, asking her to turn to his side. At first, she refused to notice him but the repeated disturbance made her notice him and turn to his side, but with a sharp look for a fraction of a second. A terrible storm in the sea and a ship dancing on top of piled waves in wild winds was the scene going on the screen. It was all a picture of Shyam's mind. In wild rage, he pulled his wife by the hand to his side and bawled out, "What is all this?"

"Oh, my boor, what is wrong with you?" She made a frightful cry as she gave a stout blow on the cheek of Shyam. "Take it easy. Hold yourself. I will look to it," said the young stalwart, appeasing the lady. He suddenly got up and came to the side of Shyam. He observed Shyam for a few seconds and said, "The dear poor fellow, he is mad. Make yourself comfortable with a cigarette." He took a cigarette, put it nicely between the lips of the lady and lighted it.

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Shyam's head reeled. He was awakened as if out of a dream. He calmly came out of the theatre and walked all the way to the hermitage of the Sanyasin. In a pensive mood, he narrated all the scene to the Sanyasin and begged him to explain the reason why his wife was so faithless to him in spite of his goodness and kind attitude. The Sanyasin smiled and said, "Take it easy, my boy. This was your wife in your previous birth. Now her present husband is the young stalwart who was kind to you. Now that the spell of your projection into your previous birth is over, you can calmly go home and meet your present wife. This is what we call Samsara, my boy."

THE DIVINE PRESENCE

"Pranams. Swamiji to your lotus feet! We bow down to you to have you as our Guru. Please initiate us into a mantra." The Swamiji blessed them and asked, "What for?" One of the two disciples said, "To attain salvation."

"Salvation! You ask for something about which you have no idea. You have heard someone using the word. That is good. I am in a hurry, leaving for the Himalayas to return after one year. I will give you one mantra which you go on chanting until I return. You are to follow and abide by two injunctions: one is that you should not speak a lie. The other is that you should not think ill of others. Do this carefully and meet me after my return."

* * * *

"We bow down to your lotus feet after one year."

"Happy to see you both. I hope you have observed the two injunctions carefully while chanting the mantra

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regularly.” One of the disciples said, "I have observed the injunctions more carefully than you expect, Gurudev. I remember that you have powers of clairvoyance and clairaudience. Now I am ready to receive the next mantra."

"Then you have attained perfection in this level. You are now beyond the level of my comprehension and it is necessary for you to seek a greater Guru." The disciple believed it was so and went away. The Swamiji called the second disciple and asked "How did you fare?" The disciple clasped his hands in an attitude of surrender and said, "It is up to you to judge and decide. If you think that I am fit for the next initiation, you please give it. If you think that I am not fit, then, you direct me to do what you like."

Then the Guru said, "My boy, you are on the right path. I know that you have not spoken a lie nor did you think ill of anyone throughout the year. In the course of your pursuit, you had many difficulties with many people. You had many trying situations. What was it that saved you

THE DIVINE PRESENCE

from speaking a lie or thinking ill of anyone? Is it your innate goodness or the idea that I was observing you through my supernatural powers?" The disciple replied in a humble way, "My Lord, I cannot venture to put forth that my innate goodness could come out to work upon me without the aid of your influence. It is the idea that you are always present with me that saved me from the two dangers and trained me throughout the year."

"Then tell me who saved you throughout the year," asked the Guru.

"It is yourself, my Lord, who saved me," was the answer.

Again, the Guru questioned, "Is it your belief about my presence or my presence itself that saved you?"

"My Lord, I had always the idea with me that you were observing me," the disciple answered.

"Then it is your idea about me that saved you and your idea existed as a part of your mind. So, the Guru is your

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idea of your Guru. The fact is that your idea itself is your Guru who saved you. Remember that it is always your mind that can save you by elevating itself into your presence which is in no way different from My presence in you. See, the Guru exists in the disciple and the disciple exists in the Guru. This is the divine Presence into which I initiate you today. Now you can take leave and go about into the wider world. Wherever you go, you are in Me and I am in you. May the Lord I AM bless you."

SANYASIN

Those were the days when Janaka ruled from his capital, Videha. His friend and classmate Swayamsiddha lived in Prayaga. Being an ardent aspirant of the path of liberation, he remained unmarried in the name of celibacy until late. Eventually, however, he got married on the advice of Janaka. His only son, Samyathi, was a pampered child. The boy grew into an obstinate and self-willed person and followed his own way of spiritual practices. His only ideal was to remain unmarried and become a Sanyasin. Whenever he was angry with his parents, he threatened them with this idea.

The father was patient and put up with him for a long time, and in the end, he said, "Look, my boy, no one is the least affected in this world if you become a Sanyasin. Your would-have-been children will be born to a father who is wiser than you. I only wish that you attain perfection before

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you are a Sanyasin. There is a proverb that the herb in your own garden is ignored for curative needs. Since you do not care to take advantage of my presence in your spiritual path, I advise you to go and have a darshan of Janaka the King, who is my classmate. Then do as you like. This is my wish.”

According to his father's advice, Samyathi went to the city of Janaka. Videha, the capital of Janaka, was a beautiful city of many gates. As he approached the main gate, he was stopped and asked to wait. The guard of the gate said, "You cannot enter now, since it is not yet time."

"What is the reason? Why should anyone wait?" asked Samyathi.

"Our King is spending his time with many of his young ladies of the Court," answered the guard. "Do you know who I am?" asked Samyathi, a bit ruffled. "Yes, I know. I AM, my self", replied the guard, with a smile. "As impertinent as it is meaningless. This is about your reply," remarked Samyathi.

SANYASIN

"It is not only a reply but also the answer that is too true and true with everyone. Understand that I am the dweller in everyone."

"But for my father's advice I would not have approached the gates of your king who is more fond of women than men. In fact, I hoped to have some revelation by the teachings of your king. Excuse me if I am plain and direct in my remarks," said Samyathi. The gate guard looked into his eyes and said, "It is nothing. If we are disturbed by your remarks, how can we be the gate guards of the one who knows Brahman? You say you are a spiritual aspirant. If you are satisfied by being admitted and if you are disappointed by not being admitted, then what about your spiritual attitude?"

The boy said, "Yes, it is true. With pleasure I wait for my own time." "Now, you can enter," said the gate guard and allowed him to go directly to the palace of Janaka.

"Wonderful. The gate guard himself seems to be a spark of Brahman. What would be the presence of Janaka

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himself? I doubt if I can stand before him and talk to him. He may not even care to speak with boys of my stature.” Thinking so, he crossed many gates and was presented directly to Janaka, who was sitting amidst many young ladies. He introduced himself to Janaka, standing before him, "I am Samyathi, the son of Swayamsiddha, who is your classmate. I await your holy presence.” Janaka did not respond nor did he care to cast his look upon the boy. Samyathi grew wild and his blood fumed in his veins for a minute. Then Janaka stood up with a smile of humility and came to the boy. He said, "I welcome you. You are born for something noble. I feel lucky to have your presence today." Then Janaka made him sit on a pedestal, washed his feet and sprinkled water on his own head and on others in veneration. All bent their heads and bowed in acknowledgement.

Samyathi was more than suffocated with joy. He said to himself, "My father never recognised my merit like this. This king is really enlightened and he knows all. That is why he could understand me. In fact, I myself had no idea

SANYASIN

of myself until this moment." Then he stood up and blessed the king and those around him. All settled when Janaka stood up and said, "Oh! The Great One, do you know that spiritual souls are not ruffled by insults and not elated by flattery? It is a matter of great importance that your presence in this gathering serves as an eye-opener. Now, it is time for my court dancer to begin her performance. I present to you a rare piece of dance performance which you will surely appreciate." Saying so, Janaka waved his hand for the commencement of the performance.

A young damsel of rare beauty made her entrance upon the stage. On her head, she had a very big round plate of metal. Along the circumference, there were many oil lamps with wicks burning. At the centre, there was a pot full of water. Another, smaller plate with lamps and a smaller pot was poised on top of the pot. In this fashion, there were seven plates with seven pots arranged one upon the other vertically to form a cone on the head of the dancer. She began to dance slowly. After a little while, the dance gained its tempo and she began to skip and jump and

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whirl and toss in all directions. Sometimes she sat and lied down and again stood up. All the time she maintained the plates in perfect poise. The lamps shone unflustered and the water in the pots was unspilled.

The dance had its natural culmination, then the damsel made a soft and effective exit. Janaka turned to Samyathi and said, "Look here! The dancer stands for the one who lives on this earth. The lamps shine to represent the many psychological, psychic and intellectual powers in man. The pots of water stand for the many moods, emotions and aspirations and expectations and targets. These plates are the planes of perception and they are the various levels of practice. This is the real wisdom which transcends the physical existence. Take this as my first initiation to you. Now follow me to witness the method of practising the utterance of the Veda." Janaka took him by the hand to a big compound. There Samyathi saw two milk-white oxen yoked by a wooden plough-plate to which a plough was fixed. Janaka gave him a whip with a long tapering rope and said, "I give you one acre of land to plough. This is the

SANYASIN

field of your action which represents your own body. The pair of oxen is the pair of opposites that is kept to neutralise the sense of polarity in you which you call sex consciousness. The plough represents your will to progress. Do you see the whip? It stands for your skill. It contains three cords plaited together intact. The cords are white, red and black in colour. They represent the qualities of equilibrium, activity and inertia in you. This is the Veda which my disciples practise. During the first few days of practice, more than half of the aspirants use this whip to lash the oxen as many times as they can, for the simple fact that they possess the whip. These oxen are transcendent in their tenderness. Every whiplash leaves its mark upon their body for ever. Through experience, people understand gradually that these oxen can understand the human language and plough the land without the need for lashes. But alas! By the time people gain in experience, the oxen grow disfigured by the many marks imprinted on their hide in ugly fashion. There are a few of the children of my kingdom who heed my counsel. They achieve the fruit of

KULAPATI STORIES

this land by not lashing at all. They preserve for themselves my gracious bounty of the pure milk-white oxen unto eternity. This whip is only ornamental. I wish you too follow their footsteps and receive the fruit of your field of action by not using rough and rude methods.

"Another strange feature about these oxen is that they grow furious whenever they see a robe of saffron colour. They get frightened and pounce upon people on seeing this robe. Then they stop obeying you. These oxen are as powerful as they are good. Remember this and have the fruits of your own field by making a proper use of your good sense. From now onwards you are one among the Videhas, who transcend their body and live. Convey the good news to your father that I have blessed you."

FOUND AT HOME

The train was running at a jumping speed. The rocking movement of the passengers was in tune with the sounds of the train, that grew more and more melodious. After a while, the scenery from the window appeared to run more and more slowly. The train stopped at Gudur. Madhu got down and approached the refreshment stall with good appetite and hungry looks. After some struggle at the table, he could have a handful pack of idlis with the chatni escaping through his fingers. He passed his right hand to his hip pocket to pay. Suddenly he found it empty. Vacant look escaped from his eyes and he stood like a statue. Gently his fingers grew numb but they could manage to enter his front pocket and pay off the little money. He suddenly turned back and with an uncontrollable speed he was inhaled into his own compartment. He found all his baggage except his purse intact. After desperate and repeated searching, he could find the same thing again and again. The purse was missing. He could notice only the train starting and gaining speed with his recollections of the

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railway ticket, reservation receipt, addresses, some important papers and above all his eight thousand rupees in the purse. As he was thinking of the ticket examiner, he was there. Madhu tried to explain to him his plight, but it was not at all accepted favourably. There was something growing heavy in the chest while Madhu's head began to reel. He could remember only one thing – he was made to get down in the next halt safe with all his baggage.

Everyone was busy on the platform in his own way and it was quite a babble of many tongues. No one noticed him except a black illiterate dwarf with a clean-shaven head. He was having with him two smaller shaven heads and incidentally he was also returning from Tirupati.

“Do you belong to this place?” asked the shaven head.

“No, I meant to ask you the same question,” said Madhu.

“My name is Tirupathi. I lost my purse with tickets and about Rs. 55/-,” answered the shaven head. “There is much pain in my chest suddenly, my head is reeling and my sight is growing dim,” said Madhu reluctantly sitting on the

FOUND AT HOME

platform. He continued, "I lost my ticket and much money. I do not know what to do. Suddenly I feel my head vacant."

"Sir, do not worry. I too lost it. I am with two children whereas you are travelling single. This place is new to me also. But why do you feel for it. We will go into the town and there will be people who will understand us." Saying so, he suddenly held Madhu in his arms since he fell unconscious.

* * * *

"The pressure is very high and there is surging of blood to the chest," said the doctor, taking away his steth. As he was handing over the prescription of medicines to Tirupathi, who was standing on the other side of the stretcher, Tirupathi said, "I have already explained to you our position in this new town. This is a government hospital. I hope you are also a man with wife and children." The doctor took off the chit.

* * * *

As Madhu opened his eyes, he could look at the beautiful scene of dawn through the glass window. "Where are we?" he asked. "In the fourth floor of the government

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hospital. I am Tirupathi. I and my two sons did not sleep since the doctor wanted us to observe you throughout the night.”

“How is it possible that you could admit me in the hospital and get the treatment done? Now I slowly recollect that you too lost all your money and tickets. Now the question is, how to reach my native place?” slowly asked Madhu.

Tirupathi immediately answered, "Why do you get confused? I am here. I too have to reach my native place. Moreover, the doctor said that you should be sent immediately to a bigger hospital. He says that there is something of a mild heart attack suspected." As Tirupathi finished his sentence, Madhu again grew unconscious.

* * * *

Madhu slowly opened his eyes and his eyes could find a sign board upon which it was painted “Sobha Clinic”. It was something familiar. Gradually he could understand that he was in the K. G. Hospital. By his side, he saw Tirupathi saying, "We are in the third floor. Here is your

FOUND AT HOME

wife." Madhu found his wife weeping as she approached him. Tirupathi said, "Why, the doctor says that he is O.K." Madhu slowly asked Tirupathi, "How could we come here?" Tirupathi said, "I am with you all the while. There is nothing like a 'how' when the Lord wills everything good. I could manage to bring you here and send word to your family." Madhu looked into the eyes of Tirupathi in wonder and veneration. In his looks, he found all the gates leading to hope and faithfulness opened. What a rare splendour of grace glancing through illiterate eyeballs. Suddenly Madhu said, "What about yourself?" Tirupathi said, "Same thing as that of yourself but for the illness which you invited suddenly. I cared two pins for the money I lost. There are people everywhere and we have nothing to fear." Again, Madhu asked, "I think you have not had your meal or tiffin all the time and your young ones too." He asked his wife to give some money to Tirupathi. Tirupathi laughed and said, "Why, Sir! Without eating how could I bring you all the distance? We had everything and a few minutes back we had breakfast also. No question of money. My father says that money is a slave of necessity. As long

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as the Lord is there in our hearts, everything comes as it is required.”

* * * *

"Here is your purse, Madhu." Sudhakar made a dramatic entrance into the room of Madhu with Madhu's purse stretched out. "I just picked your pocket in the train for fun. But again I could not find you in the train. I was much disturbed and reported the matter to the police everywhere. I am sorry I did not expect such a rude shock to you out of my brutal joke.”

CONDITIONED REFLEX

"And this is conditioned reflex," smiled Shyam while the delicate folds of his eyelids appeared through the gold-rimmed spectacles. The night Express was running in a rushing speed, throwing thick lumps of darkness from the distant skies right through the glass-window before which Shyam was sitting. In the unfathomable depths of darkness seen through the window, there were a few dim lights and three or four faces of talking people in reflection.

Shyam took his degree in psychology in the Wisconsin University and has been working as a Professor of Psychology in one of the Indian Universities. He was the only son of a bloated plutocrat and the only son-in-law of a very rich rural businessman. Being the first educated member among his kith and kin, his was the holy writ to all those around him. His professorship rendered gold plating to the silver spoon with which he was born.

"Many such valuable experiments are found recorded in Pavlov's notes on reflexes. But, Sir, does the theory

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apply as much to the human beings as to the dogs?" asked a lone middle-aged gentleman wearing a khadi-lalchi. Shyam replied, "Reflexes belong more to nerve centres than the mind. Hence they are common to all advanced living beings."

"Then you assure that dogs are among the advanced living beings?" Saying so, Hari, the middle-aged man, grew red in the face. He gasped and suddenly began to weep. All felt strange. There was an unbreakable silence among all the passengers for a few minutes. Shyam took off his spectacles and looked into the eyes of Hari. Hari stopped weeping and Shyam smiled. But again, Hari burst out into uncontrollable waves of weeping and crying. Shyam's Venus face grew pale while he looked aimless into the eyes of Hari. Then Shyam explained to all the people in the compartment that Hari was his brother-in-law who lost his wife in a train accident. All felt pity, and Hari was the pampered child of the rest of the passengers throughout the night. Once, Hari got up and embraced Shyam by the throat very tightly and began to bawl out in weeping. Shyam grew restless and a bit angry. He could come out from the clutches of Hari's arms in great panic and threw

CONDITIONED REFLEX

him aside. All felt bad about Shyam. "Do not you have goodness enough to console your brother-in-law and keep him in good moods? You say you are educated, what is the use?" chided loudly an old orthodox widow from a corner. "And you say you are a Psychology Professor. Don't you know how to bring him back to normal moods?" Saying so, a young girl who was a medical student smiled. Shyam grew restless and with no words changed his seat. He sat in the opposite corner at a safe distance. Suddenly Hari got up crying and went straight to Shyam. He again embraced him by the throat, from which it was more difficult for Shyam to come out. It was a scene of Macbeth and Banquo's ghost for more than an hour.

The train stopped at Nellore station. Three stalwarts were running on the platform, up and down the train, peeping through the windows and shouting, "Hari, Hari!" One of them saw Hari and said, "Oh! Here he is!" All the three entered the compartment and dashed straight to Hari, crushing the feet of the passengers. One of them gave two big blows upon the neck of Hari and shouted, "You buffalo! You are crying here. We are almost panicky about you." Then the old orthodox lady stood up and shouted in

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anger, "Who are you to beat the poor chap? He is in great calamity. If you are his relative and if you are travelling with him, don't you know how to take care of a helpless child like this who lost his wife in an accident and is weeping for her?"

"Shut up," said one of the stalwarts. "He is not yet married. We are bringing him from the lunatic asylum of Madras after some treatment. We are advised to take him to a specialist at Visakhapatnam." "Is it so?" said the orthodox lady with a sigh. Shyam snatched his box, got down from the compartment and disappeared into the crowd. One of the passengers felt queer and asked, "How is it that this Psychology Professor informed us that he was his brother-in-law and that his wife died in an accident?" There was a big question mark in the whole of the compartment. The old lady stood up and said, with waving hands, "This must be another patient from the lunatic asylum, similarly escaped from his people and sitting in our compartment. It is all Karma."

DEVIL DOCTOR

The two hollow eyes of the big skull placed on the wooden altar looked into the eyes of the much-frightened girl sitting before the altar. The brow mark made with blood on the face of the skull frightened the girl more. The smell of the incense gave a stupefying and eerie feeling to the innocent girl who sat cross-legged before the skull with her loose hair dancing around her head as she nodded the head with all her strength.

"Ghost! You can't but confess your identity. Tell me your name and tell me what for you have come and possessed the girl."

The girl answered as she nodded her head. "My name is Ramani. I am the helpless wife of Veeriah. I committed suicide because of the cruelty of my husband. I am hungry. I want food."

Bhutanadh, the devil chaser, suddenly broke the coconut and drenched the girl in coconut water. He suddenly snatched the hen that was kept by his side and cut

KULAPATI STORIES

its neck with the knife at one stroke. He drenched the girl in the blood of the hen. Then he sprinkled boiled rice on the head of the girl and said, "Be satisfied. Now I will catch you in this bottle and imprison you, never to return. I will bury you deep forever." Then the girl got frightened and began to weep and cry, saying, "Do not imprison me. Do not bury me. I promise I do not visit the girl again."

Bhutanadh shouted, "No! I do not believe you. You have made many promises hitherto, only to break. I do not leave you." Saying so, he held a handful of the hairs of the girl and cut them with scissors. He threw them into a bottle carefully and corked the bottle tight. The girl perspired and swooned. She fell on her back into a trance of enfeeblement. Bhutanadh ceremoniously wound up the ritual and asked the people around him to feel the bottle, how heavy it was with all the weight of the devil. They all tried to lift the bottle and felt it very heavy. They were all convinced of the weight of the devil and were much satisfied. Bhutanath took the bottle and walked out of the house with an air of triumph.

DEVIL DOCTOR

"Namaste, Govind. How do you do?" Bhutanadh greeted Govind on the way, with a limping walk due to the weight of the devil in the bottle which he carried.

"Namaste, Guruji. I am fine. Why do you carry the empty bottle feeling the weight of it?" said Govind.

Bhutanadh: "Empty bottle? Your brain is always empty. You always argue that there are no devils. You gaze at this bottle for a few moments and tell me if you still believe that there exists nothing but Lord Krishna. If you still believe that ghosts do not exist, now tell me. It took three months for me to harness this devil and capture her in the bottle. Had you seen the plight of the girl possessed by this devil, you would have been fully convinced of the existence of the devils besides the existence of your Lord Krishna in this universe. Now you hold the bottle in your hand and tell me if it is unusually heavy with all the weight of the devil."

Govind smiled and held the bottle in his left hand. "Hari Om! It is heavy only of its glass and the air in it. I do not find anything more than that. True to my conscience I

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find I can hold it in my left hand for as long a distance as you wish."

Bhutanadh said, "The pity of it is that devils do not make their appearance for those who do not believe. The same is the case with your God also. Hold the bottle in your hands and gaze at it with rapt attention, then you will be able to see the devil in its true shape."

Govind held the bottle in his hands and closed his eyes in meditation of the Lord. He said, "Hari Om!" and looked into the bottle. He saw a transparent crystal blue image of Lord Krishna playing his flute. The Lord smiled with alluring looks. Govind gazed and gazed and said, "What is all this, my Lord? Bhutanadh calls you devil. How is it possible that you are bottled? Of course, you can be bottled by anyone who can think of you. It is possible that you were imprisoned at the time of your birth along with your parents. Nothing is impossible with you. Why do you enjoy the play of Bhutanadh deceiving himself like this in his false experiences?"

Lord Krishna said, "Everyone deceives himself but nothing is false. Everyone is true in his own observations

DEVIL DOCTOR

and experiences. This is because everyone deceives himself. Unless one deceives oneself, there is no truth for one. My truth can never be the truth of everyone, unless anyone deceives himself in his own quest for truth. There will be no quenching of truth unless there is a quest for truth. I am neither quest nor quenching but I lead everyone to me through his own quest and quenching. It is false to say that anyone is false in his experience."

Govind bowed down to the Lord in ecstasy and questioned with tears in his eyes, "Are you the Lord or the devil? Which is true?"

Sri Krishna said, "I am both. I am your Lord to you. I am the devil to Bhutanadh. Just as I was death to the demons and life to the devas, I am both. This is because Bhutanadh makes his livelihood through devils, not through the Lord. I am bound to give him his livelihood only as a devil. I am obliged to feed him as much as I am to you."

Govind questioned, "Then, my Lord, where is salvation to Bhutanadh?"

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Sri Krishna said, "At the same place where you have. Salvation is a word coined by you. Hence, I should give you liberation from your concept of salvation. Similarly, I have the duty of feeding the curiosity of Bhutanadh about the existence of ghosts. This I feed besides the belly of Bhutanadh. Bhutanadh does not believe in the concept of salvation. Hence, he needs no liberation from the concept of salvation. Until he needs, I do not propose to rouse him to the existence of the concept of salvation and liberation. See, all the creatures live in me and some of them, why, many of them do not create the concept of salvation and liberation. Yet they live in me. For those who want salvation, I am their salvation. For those who want food, I am their food. For those who want their struggle for existence, I am their struggle. For those who want Me, I am what I am to them."

STRICTLY IMPERSONAL!

Sukumar is a post-graduate in commerce. He is unmarried still, and is recently employed in a big business firm. He has rented a decent room in the house of Ramdas, who is the father of six daughters. From the very first day, Ramdas began to visit and spend much time during leisure hours in the room of Sukumar. The conversations went on in a homely way and Ramdas always enquired about the domestic conditions and the financial status of Sukumar. “It is very difficult for a brilliant young man, unmarried, to get along with the society on right lines in these days,” said Ramdas. Sukumar was not very much pleased with his conversations since he suspected some matrimonial designs in the mind of Ramdas. He used to be curt and cold in his replies and Ramdas never minded.

Sukumar was very busy since he had a promotion test and an interview within the next four days. He was busy with his textbooks late in the night. It was 1 AM when Ramdas peeped in with a smile. “Take care of your health

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first. You are away from your parents and it will be very difficult if your health is disturbed, especially before your examination,” said Ramdas. “I know all that, but this is the time for me to equip myself. This morning I could secure a good letter of recommendation from Mr. Das to one of the members of the selection committee,” answered Sukumar. “Das is no doubt a powerful industrialist of our city, but his word carries no weight with any one of the well-behaved bosses of our place. He gives you a strong letter of recommendation as he does to everyone. Before you carry the letter to the boss, he telephones to him to warn that it is only a formality. Your work and your performance is always a better qualification than the letter from Mr. Das,” said Ramdas. Sukumar did not relish the conversation and kept silent, burying his head in his lessons.

It was 7 o'clock in the morning when Sukumar woke up with a high fever. He was having pains all over his body and the headache was very severe. He could not get up from the bed. For one moment he had the idea of calling Ramdas and informing him for some medical aid, but he kept quiet since he did not like the idea once again. Sumathi, the youngest daughter of Ramdas, entered the

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room and said, “Uncle, are you not well? Why don't you get up and take bath?” She observed him for a moment and went away. Ramdas came within no time and found Sukumar having a high fever. Immediately he brought a doctor and got him treated. Ramdas applied for leave and stayed with Sukumar all through the day. ”I told you to take care of your health first. See, it is very difficult if you do not recover by this evening.” The wife and children of Ramdas attended on Sukumar and he was normal by evening.

Sukumar made a nice performance of his written test. The next morning he was called by Seshadri, one of the appointing bosses. Seshadri invited him to his house and offered coffee. “This evening you will have the interview. Do not grow nervous and keep a calm mind. That is all what you have to do. The rest of the thing will be looked after by me. Rise to the occasion and prove yourself just above the average. I am here to pick you up within my reasonable and moral limits.” Then Sukumar said, “I am much grateful to you. Sir, how is it that you take interest in my case? Mr. Das is known to me for a long time. I expect Mr. Das telephoned to you about me, Sir. He gave me a

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letter of introduction to be presented to you, Sir.” ”That is a serious disqualification. He is notorious for giving such letters in thousands. Burn it away and you are safe. It is Mr. Ramdas who told me many good things about you. I hold him in high esteem since he is one who never wants any favour from anyone. You came to my notice because of your regularity of work and your pleasing manners. I only enquired Ramdas about you when he narrated something good about you,” said Seshadri and disposed Sukumar.

“Accept my congratulations, Sukumar. Just now I came to know that you were promoted,” greeted Ramdas as Sukumar came home. “Respected sir, you are the cause of all my success. You used your good offices for me and never revealed it to me,” said Sukumar humbly. Ramdas replied, “Nothing of that. Everyone gets what is due to him and there is no question of anyone helping anyone. I felt like helping you only because of your good behaviour. It is your behaviour that helped you and there is no question of anyone recommending about the good behaviour of others. You are one among my children whom I never helped against their good behaviour.”

IT IS SO FOREVER

“Bless me, my lord, so that I may come out successful in the ensuing elections. I want to serve the country and the people,” said Ranjan wiping the dust of the feet of his own Guru with both hands. The Guru smiled and stretched his hand into empty space. Lo! There was a beautiful coconut mysteriously precipitated from space. It was peeled nicely. The Guru smiled and gave the coconut to Ranjan. Ranjan received it and with a smile of obedience and veneration asked, “Can I take this as the sign of my sure success in the elections?” “Break it and you will find the grace of God inside. Remember that I am always behind you. Whatever you do will be immediately fruitful.” “Guruji, shall I break the coconut and eat the prasad all for myself?” “Yes, but you do it at the end. Let your efforts be finished to culmination, then you can break the nut and eat the prasad all for yourself.”

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Ranjan placed the holy coconut safely on the altar of his shrine. He stood as a candidate in the elections and began to make his presence felt by the people day in and day out by his slogans and his omnipresence in the form of his own agents and workers. He did not mind disturbing the sleep of the public since he wanted to help the public by paying a fantastic price to purchase their esteemed and costly votes. Just as many of his colleagues do, he began to explain to his own devotees that this a way of helping the public and looking after the needs of the poor and hence cannot be classed under bribery. Even during the tranquil hours between 1 AM and 5 AM, people received shouts of his slogans in dreams. Some grew delirious and some grew wild. They have to put up with all this because it is for their own good.

More than 20 lakhs of his hard-hoarded money has been burnt away at the tip of the wick named power lust on the altar of the Lord's will. This is the only opportunity for the gods to make people spend money for the public. Now the elections are over. Still the papers are floating in the breeze with the emblems of the various implements of

IT IS SO FOREVER

agriculture printed on them by way of advertisement. Various candidates have popularised the poor, half-starved tiller and his implements as the trademarks of their own ballot boxes. Votes are being counted and agents run up and down. The candidates wait to meet the doomsday of their result with desperate faces and blood-shot eyes. All this is but to serve the public. Leaders fight and fight among themselves to serve the public. Ranjan is walking up and down the shrine room. There is the nicely peeled coconut kept safe on the altar. It is peeping through its own eyes of kumkum and turmeric and smiling.

“How is the position?”

“Ours is leading.”

The same conversation is being heard between the candidate and his agents of all parties. Still Ranjan has the coconut out of space. “Can the same power of my Guruji make me a success in the elections?” Ranjan asked himself.

“What does the innocent Guruji know of the elections? I have done many objectionable things before the elections are finished. Can the power of our Guruji counteract all

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these things and bring me out successful?” again he asked himself.

The results have been announced and Ranjan broke the coconut before he allowed his own agent to announce the news to him. The coconut was all rotten inside. The shell is broken and the result is out. There is the great disillusionment but only of one of the preliminary layers.

“Guruji! You promised me success in the elections. But what is this? How is it possible that your prediction and blessing go false?”

The Swamiji expressed a tranquil smile through his wrinkled lips and said, “I never promised anything except the result. It is the result of all you did that the coconut gave out to you. It is all I promised. I was never unwise to spend anything but my love on yourself in the name of the public. Not less than a hundred candidates received the blessings of their own Gurujis. Each candidate seeks blessing against the others. But we, poor Gurujis, have nothing against anyone. To serve one is to harm many. To help one individual is to get others defeated. This is a struggle of life

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which we do not like and from which we stand aloof. If you want to taste what we experience, you can follow our path.”

With the face of a beaten cat, Ranjan questioned, “Guruji, you promised to stand behind me in all my efforts.” Swamiji replied, “Narayana! In the mane of the Lord I always stand behind you as the witness of all you do. This I do for everyone who approaches me. Supporting does not mean interfering. The sun gives you life but he never takes part in all you do. I gave you the coconut only to stand as a witness of all you do and to show you the fruit of your own actions.”

Ranjan questioned again, “You have the power to precipitate the coconut from air. Don’t you have the power to make me successful in the elections?” The Swamiji answered, “Power cannot be dictated. Power is a manifestation of the will of the Lord and you cannot dictate terms. It is only wisdom that can steer power. Lust can never touch the power that is guiding the trend of things in creation, my boy. Everyone gets according to his own doings. So too the people of a nation realise their own

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leader according to what they do and what they support.
Thus it is written and so it is fulfilled. It is so forever.”

NEARING THE SHORE

Charandas is a seasoned politician with many claims about his service to the country. He is treading many a village to give publicity to his claims. He is on his pre-election pilgrimage, canvassing for himself with many an appeal to uphold his position so that he may look after the interests of the suffering public as long as the stars shine. He promised Ganges water and Kaveri water to be brought to mix up with Krishna and Godavari waters. That day he could cover three villages and shower three lectures in contempt of his opponents, at the end of which he reached the sandy bank of a small river. He could not find a boat to cross and he was walking along the bank to find one. At last he could find a small old boat with a fisherman rowing.

“My brother! Can you lead me to the other shore? I will pay for it. My work is so urgent that I have to request you and there is no other alternative except your

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acceptance,” said Charandas, wiping the sweat of his brow in the hot sun of 3:00 PM.

The fisherman said, ”This is not a boat for passengers. This is a small fishing boat which allows only one person to ride upon. Nor is it safe to venture. The river is going to have a tide, according to my expectation. My mind says that something is wrong. Better take rest than to take risk.”

“The pity is that you poor innocent children of Bharat cannot understand the pressing needs of the country. I pant to serve the country and its public inch by inch. Understand that you are going to have the privilege of taking a patriot in your boat,” said Charandas with a peel of laughter like the crow of a cock.

“As you please. But do not blame me afterwards if anything untoward happens,” said the fisherman, inviting Charandas into his boat.

Bearing the burden of two people, the boat shows signs of limping dance in response to every wave. In the meanwhile, Charandas was preaching the gospel of his own party and politics and imparting to the fisherman the

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Sermon on the Mount of every wave while he was biting his teeth in fear at every pace of the tide.

The river began to gain in tide as the boat reached the midpoint. Sometimes the boat was not seen between two big tidal waves and sometimes it was seen above the crest of a wave. Charandas lost his hopes along with his presence of mind. “Is there any hope that we can reach the shore?” he asked. “It is all your choice and the result depends upon your stars. It is in no way less risky than the gradient in the number of your votes while counting after the election. To tell you the truth, we are sure to get drowned if both of us continue to stay in the boat. If one were to vacate, there is a chance for the other to reach the shore,” said the fisherman. Charandas grew furious and said, “It is against the principle of democracy. Democracy pleads equality. Do you mean that I should jump and get drowned while you reach the shore safe?”

Then the fisherman said, “If I jump, I can swim and reach the shore. The trouble is that you cannot lead the boat by yourself to the shore. You are sure to get drowned. I am

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sure to be saved. You claim to be a patriot and you say you work for the country and the people. Can't you show that much of good spirit as to accept and jump to save my life? I repeat that I am safe anyway. The only thing is, you will be proved to be a hypocrite of a patriot just before the yawn of your death. Exhibit your goodness and be prepared to die before you actually get drowned. Then it will be established before your death that you are a patriot. The flag will be clipped to your collar in the other world. You say it is not democracy if I ask you to jump and get drowned. Is it real democracy if you refuse to make the boat journey safe for a brother Indian? Now your democracy is drowned. Accept your defeat and I will save you." A big wave lifted the boat up at an angle of 45 degrees, then Charandas caught hold of the feet of the fisherman and cried, "I accept I am not a true believer of democracy, save me. Save me for the sake of my wife and three children."

"Say so," said the fisherman, "and be comforted. Don't worry. The boat is safe and I will lead you safe to the

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other shore. Just for fun I played with you. Nothing is wrong with my boat and the tide. All this is quite common, just like the tidal wave of the public opinion of our country. This is common to us everyday but we row across the river safe. You may be surprised to know that I am educated. I am a graduate of politics but I continue to be in my profession. My boy, the time is changed and the face of politics is changed. You are the only one who remained unchanged. Now we are nearing the shore and you can run to your wife and three children unagitated. The only thing I request from you is not to make people's minds agitated by your preachings of froth and teachings of foam.”

IT IS ALL “MY” PLAY

“Mankind is advancing towards perfection. People begin to have many incentives to become good and better. They create many a pretext to make their march towards Me. The number of people who think and speak of Me is fast increasing,” said Lord Siva to his sweetheart, Parvathi. They were in the clouds, on their honeymoon trip towards a city. They were travelling amidst the splendour of lightning and thunder. “You are a poor, pious, innocent God, my Lord,” said Parvathi. “According to me, you are a very poor judge of human nature. I find that people have grown more intelligent than ever in this Kali age. They are busier about themselves than about God. See how the world of human creatures is fast re-arranging itself into a beehive of commercialisation. They have a tendency to appreciate what is useful and depreciate what is good.”

“In spite of the fact that you are the Universal Mother, you still continue to be a woman. Now, I will show you an interesting scene of three groups of people conducting

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three different processions, all marching towards Me. Three roads lead to the same centre in this city. Each group is marching along one of the three roads. Look at the first group," said Lord Siva, trying to please Parvathi but in vain.

It is a festival procession on the occasion of the birthday of Lord Ganesh. Many orthodox Brahmins are walking in a procession of pomp and splendour before the colourful chariot of the magnificent and stalwart figure of sturdy Ganesh. Hundreds of coconuts are being broken at the altar like the many heads of heroes in the war. Ganesh rides on the mammoth rat in serene majesty and silence. Brahmins are uttering Vedic chantings and are burning lumps of camphor in the big place. "Jai Jai Sri Ganesh. Bolo Bolo Prabhu Ganesh," the procession sings congregational songs. Two stout Brahmins stand on either side of Ganesh and wave tufts of Chamari's tails to the glory of the Lord.

A bigger procession is making its march along the second street. "Jai Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram." A continuous roar of Bhajan reverberates in the streets. Many orthodox Brahmins walk before the chariot of Sri Rama,

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with three vertical lines well stamped on their faces. Tall and healthy images of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana ride in this chariot, colourful and attractive. Hanuman kneels at the feet of Rama. Continuous breaking of coconuts and peeling of bananas takes place. These two processions march along two different streets towards the same centre. “Is this the procession of Lord Ganesh?” asked a poor innocent devoted soul. “Shut up! Don’t be foolish. This is Lord Sri Rama, who rules over the 14 worlds. Ganesh is not a Lord at all when compared to Sri Rama. Your Siva Himself is a devotee of Rama. This proves that Rama is the Lord. How can a worshipper become a Lord? Then, what to speak of his son, Ganesh? Rama is the only Lord, who rules all the worlds.” Saying so, the Brahmin broke a coconut at the altar. “In the Vedas it is said that Lord Vishnu is the supreme God. Everyone, like Ganesh or Siva, cannot be God. Nowadays, everyone wants to be God. This is Kali age. All and sundry, including human beings, are trying to claim that they are avatars. I can prove that no God except Vishnu is the real God,” said one among the procession walking before Rama.

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“Go and read Ramayana, you will know. Your Rama was many times in trouble with the Rakshasas. He required the help of monkeys when the demons put him to many troubles. He wept when his wife was stolen. Finally, he had to worship Siva before he could get a success in the war. This proves undoubtedly that Siva is the real God. Why, even now I can prove it before your eyes. See how your Rama is being insulted by the Nayaks of atheists. How can such a God save you and me? Look how the procession of atheists insults your Rama. See how he keeps quiet,” says an orthodox pundit with horizontal lines of ash on his face and arms. Saying so, he puts an air of triumph while he walks like a grey tiger.

A third procession walks along the third street. Beautiful tall images of Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman in brilliant colours are placed in a chariot by a set of political atheists. Those who walk before the idols continuously throw sand and stones upon the idols. Two leaders of atheists who are considered to be gods among them stand on either side of the idols. With a worn-out old shoe in his hand, each of them was hitting the idols. They shout, “Rama is not a god. He is also a man like us. He was

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born as a human being with all the defects of a human being. Moreover, he was immoral in trying to become a king in the absence of his brother, Bharata. It is primitive to worship men as gods.” Each of them was garlanded continuously by the people in the procession. Flowers were being thrown upon them by the procession. As the procession reached the centre where four roads met, the procession placed a copy of the Ramayana on the ground. They kicked and burnt it. “Here is your Ramayana burnt to ashes. See how flames come out,” shouts the leader, jumping and dancing all around the burning book, like Hanuman in the streets of burning Lanka. He said, “I am the real Hanuman and the so-called sacred book is the real Lanka. Your Rama is standing in the chariot, not able to save the book from the fire.”

All the three processions met at the square where all roads met. A philosopher was standing and watching the scene along with his disciples. He said, “All roads lead to the same goal. See how these fools meet and quarrel. Some of them believe that their idols are gods. They do not know that God is everywhere and in everything. That is why they worship these idols. It is all ignorance. God has no name

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and form. Do not worship idols. Meditate upon the nameless, formless, eternal god of gods, who is omnipresent. All these idols and Avatars are man-made gods. They are all gods who failed to expel the ignorance of their own devotees.”

Siva and Parvathi were looking at the crowds of the various processions meeting at the square. Parvathi said, “See the spoiled children of Kali. See how they quarrel. See how they insult the name of God and criticise. The world is drifting into a big wave of disbelief. Still you want to believe that people are god-minded. That is why I said you are a very poor judge of human nature. All the other creatures except the humans live in God and rejoice in my presence without either thinking or insulting God. Your beloved human children create their own gods in the Kingdom of God. They pray for success and satisfaction. They demand that their own gods grant their dirty boons and expel their sins at their beck and call. To them God is their servant, discharging duties towards his honoured devotees. Their gods are created as being busy, sweating and panting in their efforts to satisfy their devotees.”

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Lord Siva smiled and said, “See how they play. My children of these human beings play with their own creation of God in many forms with many attitudes. All of them continuously try to create My presence in so many ways. Some honour My name. Some live in Me. Some dishonour My name. Some insult My name. All of them chant My name only to create My presence and live in Me. This is all the play of these beings. I create the play and they rejoice. All these pious and filthy attempts of these children are only created by Me as parts of the play. The play keeps them creating My presence in them.”

Parvathi said, “You are unpredictable. Your ways are eternally novel.”

CELESTIAL GOLD

His Holiness Swami Gambhirananda was sitting on a deer skin, well poised in Padmasana. As he went into the raptures of meditation, his face glowed pure as the sunshine. His lotus eyes, half-closed, disclosed divine tranquillity. Down near his feet, his disciple sat, with clean-shaved head. In his meditation, the disciple could locate two middle-aged persons climbing up the hill to have the darsan of his Swami. Of late, the disciple has practised thought-reading and the power to see things from a distance. This, of course, he has done without the permission of his Guru. He also believes that he has practised without the knowledge of his Guru. Of late, he is daily bothered by the diminishing number of devotees approaching the Guru. Daily he meditates for 5 minutes to attract new devotees in search of favours so that the fame of his Guru spreads far and wide. Sometimes he is in doubt if his Guru knows it, but he is not sure of it, since his Guru expresses an instinctive aversion towards powers.

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The two devotees climbing up the hill, each carries a coconut, flowers, fruits, betel leaves and incense sticks. One of them carries a big lump of camphor also. Evidently, he may receive better favour from the Swamiji. The disciple, Gagananda, thought it was his pious duty to see that his Guru favours the devotees. As he was making the first attempt to get up from the proximity of his Guru's feet to receive the devotees, he received the first jerk. Gambhirananda, the Guru, opened his eyes timely, smiled, shedding a celestial beam of smile, and asked the disciple to sit down and not to get up.

“Swami, many people come to you in many difficulties. They are all plunged in the meshes of Samsara. They badly require your favour,” said the disciple. “Favour from a Sanyasin?” The Guru smiled. In the meanwhile, the two devotees entered the hall of the Mutt, approached and fell prostrate on the ground before the feet of the Swami. “Express your difficulties,” the disciple ordered them, “the Swamiji is here to shower his blessings.”

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“No promises on others’ behalf,” smiled Swamiji. One of the devotees offered the fruits and the other things which the disciple took readily, while the Guru threw a mildly contemptuous look. He said, “We stand at the transmitting pole, and not the receiving pole.” The disciple went into a short nap of meditation by way of thought-reading and said, “You are worried about your daughter’s marriage. One proposal is at hand and you want the blessing of our Swamiji to get it fixed. Is it so?” The devotee was stricken with surprise and stood aghast with clasped hands. The Swamiji said, “This is Lord’s creation. That which is to happen will happen. No one is born till now to dictate terms to the Lord.” The disciple felt humiliated about the prestige of his Guru. The devotee, Ramarao, stood in veneration and said, “Your blessing will set everything right about my daughter’s affair.” The Swamiji smiled in silence.

“And you,” said the disciple, turning to the second devotee. You too approach on the same account. You too make your offering and your wish also will be fulfilled.” The Swami smiled and said, “If every little problem puts upon your head half of your life’s burden, how many halves

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make one whole? We find many puzzles among the mathematics of Samsara. Learn to be yourself. What you have done helps you. I am here to sponsor good. There ends my duty.”

“Why, there is an extra lump of camphor in his offering,” the disciple said. Then the Swami answered, “My favourite disciple, Gagananda! You encroach upon the spiritual fields of others. Now I leave things for you to decide and grant the boons. You seem to have much power in store. These two devotees have high hopes about the same bridegroom. Now you decide and do justice to both. In your view, the answer is simple. The lump of camphor makes all the difference. If the camphor lump can create order of preference, you work it out.” The disciple, Gaganananda, was confused. He asked, “My lord, if both of them have the same bridegroom in their minds, what can I do? How to decide and do justice to both?” Gambhirananda smiled and said, “The whole trouble is you think that you are the dispenser of justice. The dispensary of a Swamiji may heal with some degree of success diseases like Kama and Krodha. This does not mean that

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the Swamiji is the Lord Himself who hails down to earth. See how you are yourself not free from the bondages of your Karma. Your psychology, which is full of hopes, expectations and aspirations about my importance and your powers, is enough to nail you down to the carnal earth of your body. You renounced cheaper things of worldly life, only to cling to the costlier desires about my holiness and your discipleship. Pious desires and holy lust are worse than worldly desires and carnal lust. Cheap desires can be overcome easily while holy desires bind us in the chains of heavenly gold. See, it is very simple to solve the problem of these two devotees by giving them a whole-hearted blessing in anticipation of the timely grace of the Lord. At the same time, see how difficult it is for me to make you free from your bondages. They tie your hand and neck through a prolonged span and that too, in spite of my repeated blessings.”

RUNNING HORSE RACES

“You are always busy. You have no rest. Always somebody will be with you on some business or other. You are not found alone. When do you take rest?” a stranger slowly remarked after observing from a distance. His body was seen filtered through the thin costly terry-cotton slack. Crescent eyeglasses beautified his face like two lunar eclipses. His skin shone delicate with a golden yellow complexion. Thick little curves of dark silken hair covered the face. His crop, well-combed and smooth, gave a feminine beauty to the face.

“Do you intend talking to me something in private?” I questioned. “How do you know it?” was his answer. I said, “It is usual. All those who wish to have some private talk with me will enquire about my hours of rest.”

“My name is Chandra Rao. My native place is a village near Srikakulam. I am the president of my village.....”

RUNNING HORSE RACES

“I said now there is no one here except yourself. You can ask what you want directly.” “Nothing in particular. I understand that you have some acquaintance with astrology. One of my friends narrates many things about you. Of course, I do not very much believe in astrology, but I am interested to know the truth of astrology. In this matter I have seen many astrologers.”

“It is not exactly desirable to waste time about things which you do not believe in,” I hooked the conversation. Then he said, “Of course! Do you believe in Nadi manuscripts? I consulted many Nadi books about my horoscope when I had been to Madras and Kumbhakonam. I got the results of my horoscope copies. All this is due to the unnecessary persuasion of my friend. I got two or three Nadi results of my horoscope. This is by the way.” I kept silent, then he again started talking. “First of all, do you believe all that is written in the Nadi books comes true? What is the importance you attach to them?”

“Tell me what it is that you want. Then I can explain things directly.” He took off his spectacles, wiped them

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with his lower cloth and put them on again. “On a holiday, I went to a Nadi astrologer at Madras. To kill time I had my horoscope results translated. There it is written that a great fortune awaits me through the running of horses in races. It is written that I have to gain some lakhs of rupees, for example—this has not come true till now. How do you explain this? I then consulted some other Nadi books of different authors. All have promised the same thing. Until today nothing came true.”

“How can this be realised unless you attend horse races and bet?” When I said so, Chandra Rao came out in true colours. “Why not? I continue betting in almost all the horse races I come across. Do not think for a moment that I am mad after the prize. It is all but to know the truth of astrology. But I have burnt many thousands in the gamble and it is all due to your astrology.” I kept silent and he was forced to continue. “By the by, my friend says that you have a Nadi book with you. Shall we consult it sometime?” “Why sometime? Let us have it now itself. Since you assure that it is a matter of academic interest, you need pay no fees. We will find out the cause of your failure in getting

RUNNING HORSE RACES

the prize. It is not exactly Nadi that I show you but it is of similar type. It is called Ramala. It comes from Arabia. Sometimes we get wonderful clues out of it. Sometimes it is inconvenient because of its uncompromising and ruthless nature.” “How to consult it?” he asked. “Go and bring some flowers and fruits. We count the number and pick out the page with a little calculation.” So he brought the flowers and fruits. Then the text read: “During the 36th year of age, he grows rich in lakhs through the running horses.” “Exactly so. It is the same 36th year that is mentioned in all the Nadi books. But the pity is that I complete the 36th year by the day after tomorrow. How can we rely upon this?”

“Let us read the lines completely,” I interfered and read out the lines. “The person belongs to a traditional orthodox family of his community. His religion does not permit him to eat animal food and taste intoxicated drinks. In this life, he loses the opportunity to amass wealth if he tastes animal food and alcohol.” Chandra Rao’s face grew pale like the morning moon as I was reading these lines out. “I feel this is not correct,” said he feebly. “Is it probable

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that the calculations sometimes go wrong in this method also?”

“Not possible. But why do you fear when you are free from alcohol and animal food?” I sounded him.

“Is it that I should not taste them from after reading these lines or from the beginning itself? What do the lines mean?” he enquired.

I read out the next line from the book. It was written: “We have informed enough. He is crooked in mind. Nothing more can be explained.”

A DRAMATIC EXIT

“I am fed up with this society. I lost all confidence in humanity as a whole. No ethics except on lips. No purity of thought except in yoga discourses. But for you Swamiji, I would have left this sickly world long ago.”

“You mean the world or your body?” asked Swamiji, with an air of mischievous detachment.

Prabhu continued, “Now, as things stand, there is no world for me. I ran away from the phantom of humanity to take shelter under your lotus feet.....”

“I wish you allow my feet to continue to touch the earth. I have neither time nor inclination to stagger with my feet on your back. Before you force me to climb upon you, you have to crawl on four legs. My boy! I understand that there is something of a serious nature troubling your mind. My common sense of your age tells me that it is your marriage problem. If you have some scanty respect for this poor Swamiji, be straight, simple and short. My ethics does

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not permit me to say that I have no time to listen to you. Still I am little enough to accept that I have some other work,” said the Swamiji, looking at the eternally periodical miracle of the setting sun, which is being painted with unspeakable changing blends of colours.

Prabhu picked up the topic again, “Swamiji! I do not believe in marriage as an end in itself. I sincerely wish that I got married with such a mate that both of us are dedicated to your work and mission.”

“A sweet concept of economy through marriage. Can I be sure that you are ready with such a mate?” questioned Swamiji, looking at the ever-changing hieroglyphs in the shades of red above the setting sun.

Prabhu leaked out, “It is because I could find such a life mate that I have ventured to put forth before you about it. My mind is attracted towards her like a magnet. Not because of something common with all but because of the innate fitness of that girl to be in your service dedicated lifelong.”

A DRAMATIC EXIT

“I wish I be saved from the astral plane involvement of your demand. I wish I suffer from want of people who want to serve me. See how the sweet breeze makes the twigs of the tree intervene between the colours of the sky and my clear vision.”

Prabhu pushed the topic further. “Swamiji! She speaks like an angel about the Masters of Wisdom. She sings like a nightingale, but only the songs of your glory and the glory of the Lord. It is all Bhakti incarnate and nothing else.”

“I fear that the Lord loses his balance in the flattery of Bhakti, though I am sure I do not lose. Even the Vedic poets prove that flattery is accepted by God through Bhakti. Now, it is a strong point to establish the necessity of your marriage. At the same time, it is a weak point to Swamiji. Enlighten your Guru as to what I have to do in this manner. Sometimes, even Swamijis are at a loss to understand their duties,” said Swamiji, as a beam of smile escaped through the graceful set of his teeth.

Prabhu broached the topic once again. “Swamiji! I want you today to clear some of my doubts about what is

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right and what is wrong. The girl whom I want to marry is all out to offer herself to me. Her parents are not advanced enough to understand her. Our nation is characteristic of its defective parents.”

“Yes, it is a national problem. Had you thought twice before you were born as an Indian, it would have been an easy evening to this Swamiji. First of all, tell me if it is not a moral weakness for Swamijis to be affectionate. Enlighten me further,” said Swamiji, while his smile was peeping like a red beam of light in the glow of sunset.

Prabhu unveiled the plot. “I place the whole situation before your feet. I bring her to you. She has accepted to offer herself to you in service. You have every right to protect the interests of those who are in your fold.”

“I took every care to see that even my skin is free from folds. You know that the Guru is all-powerful in demanding the life of an individual. You also know that the parent is the first Guru of a child. This is true unless the spiritual Guru, who is junior to parents in service, desires

A DRAMATIC EXIT

to transgress his limits,” said Swamiji, looking at the last streak of red in the setting sun.

“Now everything is very dark. One cannot see another in this human world, nor can one see himself unless he feels himself. Poor Brahma Vidya shines through dark and the even the Vedic seers feel helpless with this. They sing the glory of the Lord as Krishna. But that dark fellow is mischievous in creating an opportunity for others to imitate Him about the story of the Gopis. In spite of the darkness, I feel the presence of a third person,” said Swamiji, thinking aloud.

Prabhu was ready with his answer. “Yes, Swamiji! I have brought her now. And that too without the knowledge of her parents. I have no fear when you are here. You bless us and our marriage will be over within a second through a spell of your lips.”

“I await the spell of two different lips. They are above and beyond my stature. God is present even in the form of her parents. Our desire cannot be raised into Dharma by forcing it through the lips of a person who is impersonal up

KULAPATI STORIES

to this moment. Visualise that you will be a parent tomorrow. Don't you have compassion to direct your daughter into the path followed by the wise men of the past? Discipline is the right direction into which we the humans are to be drifted to. The fact that discipline is inconvenient to us in a situation does not disqualify it. Choose between discipline and desire. That means you have to choose between myself and your project. The simple fact that you brought her here without the consent of her parents indicates that this is not a place for me.”

The next morning, there was a big crowd before the hermitage of Swamiji. After a long discussion and investigation, they found that the Swamiji had left the hermitage forever, leaving everything of the Ashram.

15. THE PHILOSOPHER'S TOUCH

The sky above the village breathes the name of Lord Krishna while the crowds of the village march in a procession, uttering the Holy Name. The streets flood with

A DRAMATIC EXIT

flowing humanity as the procession marches in a slow majestic way. It is as if the chariot was breathing out thousands of individuals, while at the same time, it is pushing forth all the crowd in a solid bulk. It is the scene of the annual chariot festival of the lord.

A stout, tall, hefty person, neatly dressed, was peeping through his gold-rimmed spectacles towards a spot which attracted his attention. He was carrying a luxury handbag in which he was having some currency and some important papers. His pocket contained a money purse of medium size which contained a small amount of currency of various denominations.

While he was carefully managing in the crowd, he saw a Sadhu of about eighteen years sitting in Padmasana, with a towel spread before him. Evidently, he was a beggar but his face was something of a different look. His expression was replete with satisfaction. His eyes were looking for something into the crowds. It was definitely not for the few coins thrown by the pilgrims in charity. The eyes never cared if something was thrown upon the towel before him.

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He was looking at the eyes of the passers-by and casting a magnetic smile into the eyes which he could capture. Those who noticed him were throwing small coins to help him eat his subsistence. The rich man, Damodar, passed before the Sadhu and his eyes were captured by the sharp, smiling, glittering eyes of the Sadhu. However, Damodar could succeed in resisting the temptation to throw some coins and he pushed himself forth. He could not resist the temptation to look back. Lo! There was something strange and interesting. The Sadhu was picking up the coins thrown by pilgrims then and there. Where did he conceal or gather these coins? The Sadhu was almost naked, but for a Kaupeen (a loincloth). The hundreds of coins thrown by pilgrims upon the towel were being immediately picked up by the Sadhu but his hands were always empty and clean. It seemed that the coins disappeared in his palms. Strange! Hitherto Damodar had seen Sadhus who produced things from their palms and now he sees one in whose hands the coins escaped appearance!

Damodar turned back with a stealthy look and crossed the Sadhu once again. There was something unexpected!

A DRAMATIC EXIT

The Sadhu boy was throwing the coins out into the crowd again as he was picking up each coin. Is he mad? Or is he God? As the crowd was so maddeningly thick and as the humanity of the crowd was pushing individuals constantly forward, it was sure that the coins thrown back by the Sadhu could not be captured by the same persons who had given them to him. Some persons threw the coins to the Sadhu, while some others were receiving from him. Those who threw evidently did not know that the coins returned. Some children of poor parents gathered round him to capture the coins from the Sadhu. They were going round and round the Sadhu to pick up the coins again and again.

Damodar could not help looking back once again as he passed by. Once again something strange. As the coins were touched by the Sadhu, they were converted into coins of gold before he threw them. Evidently, the poor boys were gathering gold coins, while the pilgrims were throwing in copper and nickel! Damodar's attention was arrested. He turned back and took off the money purse from his pocket. He opened it to see that there was only paper

KULAPATI STORIES

currency and no coins. He was touching the currency in the purse and pondering over something.

“I know your doubt,” said the Sadhu, abruptly taking Damodar by surprise. “Even paper money can be converted into gold by my touch. The only thing you should be careful of, is that you should be able to capture it when I throw it back. The world is a bursting crowd of competition. Take care that somebody may not push you aside and capture your money turned to gold when I throw it back.” Damodar stood absorbed in hesitation for two minutes. At last, he wanted to throw one, two or three of his hundred-rupee notes to serve the purpose of sampling. Before that, he waited for a few more minutes to verify the cost of others to make sure and proceed. However he made up his mind and began counting one, two or three of his hundred-rupee notes to throw at the Sadhu.

“Counting disqualifies. No gold in return for those who count. My siddhi comes true only for those who throw money without looking at it. Throw the whole purse and try your luck. And you have a bigger purse in your bag.

A DRAMATIC EXIT

Throw the bag without opening it, and see if everything is gold to you,” the Sadhu said, as he smiled.

Damodar was in doubt. It seemed that the Sadhu was experimenting with small coins to capture bigger currency. Was it not risky if the Sadhu disappeared with the bag? But at the same time, Damodar knew that he would lose a great opportunity if the doubt was not genuine. Any big business would carry the same amount of risk whenever he wanted to invest money. Now he was not sure of the amount he was having in his purse and the bag. He did not notice at home if his wife had placed the fifty thousand rupees in the bag or not.

“Sadhu Maharaj! Can I see you tomorrow once again? I wish to throw the bag upon you with a much bigger amount,” said Damodar, folding his hands in salutation.

“I am here today. I have no tomorrow. I don’t know where I sit tomorrow. It all depends upon the festival of the day,” the Sadhu replied, while he was once again engrossed in picking up the coins from the towel and throwing them back to those who could pick up.

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THE GREATEST OFFERING

“I am the only son of my parents. In spite of the very big mansion at my native place, fitted with all modern amenities and comforts, in spite of the landed property and bank balances of my family, I do not find any comfort at my place. My parents are of an orthodox type, rigid with their principles that help me in no way. Nothing is conducive to my progress in my native environment and the mentality of my parents is no exception. My father wanted to get me educated under ideal circumstances but he failed to understand my requirements. I waited until at last I got fed up with what I have. My developing mind and expanding consciousness craved for a change. I could not resist the urge to quit my place and come to you to find my path. I find everything lively and everyone active in some work or other in your Ashram, Swamiji. I do hope you will permit me to find a place in your Ashram and settle here

THE GREATEST OFFERING

for good,” said Radhamohan, who is enchanted by the fine breeze of the evening in the colourful jungle of the Himalayan valley. Before him, the Swamiji stood like a smiling tower through whose eyes the lights of the inner halls of consciousness glittered.

“Work, work! It is one’s own work that makes it lively. Forty years ago, my child, this was all a thick jungle, a thoroughfare amidst the city of snakes, scorpions and bushes, talking in the various languages of wild insects. With bare feet and empty hands, I was ordered to settle here to build or rather to create this Ashram Village. Now you find this place habitable with all the amenities, including postal and telegraphic communications. No wonder a lazy idealist like you finds it comfortable. You say you have everything in your native village. Everything is arranged like a silver spoon in your mouth or a footstool before your feet. It is the one thing that converts a worker into a thinker and spoils him, causing him to withdraw himself to live in the ill-ventilated house of his own likes and dislikes. Then the helpless being likes to call himself a philosopher or an artist.”

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Radhamohan felt disappointed about the over-critical and uncharitable attitude of the Swamiji. He thought he came to the wrong person in his life. However, he said, “I thought your Holiness would receive me into your divine bosom with stretched hands...”

“It is always so. I receive you from the crazy world into my affectionate heart with open hands. This I do as I do it for anyone. Your belly will be looked after and it is no problem for me. You can test yourself and find out if you fit into any part of the work of my Ashram. This Ashram does not belong to me, just as I do not belong to myself. I belong to the one whom I represent and you too can try to be so. Nature is beautiful here but you can inherit that beauty only through your work. See how all my followers work here from morning to night without raising their heads. Do you think that they are tired? No. They all play with their work. It is because they work for others. This Ashram is not to enjoy but to receive others. Others remain as others as long as they live here as in a guest house. Others are converted into themselves, the residents of this Ashram, from the moment they begin to find their

THE GREATEST OFFERING

work. Try to choose your own work and locate yourself if you want to grow. If you feel lazy about the idea you can enjoy like a guest.”

Radhamohan was bewildered. He asked, “Swamiji! Give me some work and direct me at every step as to how to proceed so that I may not do the wrong thing.”

“This is what ninety-nine among the hundred demand!” smiled Swamiji. “Work is not something given but it is something taken up. If you feel that this Ashram is yours, you will begin to know your work. Then only you will begin to grow. If I entrust you with some work, you are in no way better than a paid servant, in which case it is easy to work without responsibility.”

“Swamiji! I do not find anyone polite and polished among the disciples of the Ashram. They order all sorts of things and they put many a restriction upon whatever I do. It all seems to me like a book of rules. No one is affectionate and heart to heart with me. All seem to be busy with their own work and they do not care for those who visit the Ashram. I came with great expectations. I wanted

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to learn yoga. I wanted to learn Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavadgita.”

Swamiji smiled as he looked at the sky in the valley. He said, “For yoga, Veda, Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita, you need not travel such a distance. You can get them from one bookshop or the other. Before you know what the scriptures are, you should have the fitness to know. The scriptures do not sleep in the books. They wait to walk to you as your neighbours. Principles exist in books only to be galvanised in persons around you. How can you feel comfortable with the workers here, when you do not find comfort in your father, mother and your village? Let the mind settle down before the water in you is found pure. For this you are free to stay here for any length of time or to return to your parents. If you prefer to make the same mistake again, i.e. to go to some other Ashram to try your luck, you have to continue the same process until you find settled somewhere. I have no business to convince you of anything about my own people. The daily routine here includes what you call Veda, yoga or Bhagavadgita. These people are trained in such a way that they do not spare

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themselves. They have offered their body, mind, thought, likes and dislikes to the work they do. You have offered your body, keeping your mind and likes to yourself. Your own point of view is the one that binds you here as it binds you at home. You judge others because you have your own point of view. Submit your point of view to a known or an unknown god, then you are liberated. Until then, the scriptures wait knocking at your door.”

Radhamohan fell prostrate and touched the dust before the lotus feet of the Swami.

A GOOD RETURN

“Only yesterday I came to know that your Lordship Swamiji had come down to this place. Blessed is the dust of this town that touched your feet. I came from a distance of 18 miles to have the benefit of touching the lotus feet of Swamiji. Swamiji, bless me. I am your Bhakta. This body is yours.” Chalapathi fell flat and touched Swamiji’s feet with his two hands, head, face, nose and lips, slowly creeping forward with the feet firm in his hand. With his experience gained, the Swamiji could keep his equilibrium.

“Rise, my boy,” said Swamiji. “What is it that you want? I have to bless you for your gratification.”

The Bhakta implored, “Many are my enemies, my lord. Tell me how I can get over my competitors. Everyone is jealous of my wealth. How long can I endure these difficulties? How long can I swim in this ocean of Samsara? Save me from those who cannot tolerate my prosperity.”

A GOOD RETURN

The Swamiji smiled and said, “Hare Ram! May the Lord save you from ignorance. The Lord has given you much wealth and everything that can add to your happiness. Still why do you think of your created unhappiness like your enemies and competitors? Think of your wife and children. Think of their welfare. Think of what you have to do, eat and drink. Learn, be wise and know how to be happy.”

Saying so, the Swamiji put some holy ash on Chalapati’s face. Chalapathi repeated, “Give me the power to kill all my enemies, let it be a mantra or a herb or something else.” The Swamiji smiled at the ignorance of Chalapati. He gave a mantra and explained its meaning.:“Whatever bad my enemies think of me should be returned to them.” He said, “Utter this three times in the morning while you perform your daily puja. Be careful to see that something good should be returned to your well-wishers who think good of you. Otherwise this will harm you.”

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Really powerful is the sentence given to Chalapathi. Within a few days, he found that one of his enemies was seriously ill and bed-ridden. Chalapathi was very happy. That night he got a horrible dream in his sleep. The sky was full of dark clouds. Thunders and lightning appeared. The clouds broke open and then there was a terrible figure with mouth wide open, tongue drawn out, laughing hideously, showing the long tusks. His hair stood and he was naked. He had a long, flat, curved sword in his hand. He said to Chalapathi: “Ha ha! You asked me to harm your enemy. I did so, what did you give me in return? Now my body is burning. I am hungry. Give me someone to eat.” Chalapathi said readily, “Eat my enemy. Eat all of them.” The devil said, “Not as easy as you say. For each one of your enemies, I have to eat one from your family. Now give me someone. Can I take your wife?” Chalapathi got a jerk of fear and woke up late in the night. He found his wife groaning with high fever, headache and vomiting. Chalapathi got wild, opened the door of the house and ran out into the street. He rushed to the residence of Swamiji and stood before him. The Swamiji opened his eyes and

A GOOD RETURN

smiled. Chalapathi narrated everything and implored aid. The Swamiji said, “I wanted you to repeat the sentence in your puja. I never wanted you to think that your enemies should die. The mantra proposes that whatever others think of you should return to them. It is both good and bad. Have you ever proposed once that something good should return to anyone of your well-wishers? Had you done so, such a thing would not have happened. Whatever good your friends thought of you, you wanted to get it for yourself. Whenever your well-wishers planned something helpful to you, you grabbed the situation and got benefits in business. You have friends in the government, offices and banks and business circles. All are helping you. You never thought of helping anyone of them. Hence the spirit of your friends is not with you. You are only thinking of your enemies and their spirit is there with you in your dream.”

Chalapathi cried, “Swami, save my wife first. Show mercy.”

The Swamiji smiled and said: “Save one of those who helped you. A petty clerk of your office saved you from a

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great risk of taxation. He worked night and day for you. Tomorrow it is Diwali and your clerk stands helpless with a pale face before his wife and children. He is in debts and his salary was taken by a debtor. His wife and children want something to eat, if not new clothes and crackers. Save your wife by going to the house of your clerk and making a present of 500 rupees to him just now. It is your Guru dakshina for the mantra you have received. Do you remember that you have not paid any dakshina to your Guru? If you are not kind enough to face your clerk, pay off your Guru dakshina to me so that I pay it to your clerk.”

As Chalapathi rushed home to bring the amount, he found his wife sleeping a calm, healthy sleep. Chalapathi got up from his bed suddenly to find that everything was a dream.

STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

A tall lean gentleman with bald crescent forehead entered the first class compartment with many baggages brought by the coolie, himself carrying a briefcase in his right hand and a pillow in his left hand. The pillow cover carried the words, “sweet kisses” decorated in needlework. His sweetheart, aged about more than 50, gave a warm farewell when the Calcutta mail was leaving Visakhapatnam platform for Madras. There was chill and drizzle with the dullness of an impending cyclone in the weather. As the train gained in speed, my colleague in the train began to spread many things from his hold-all out and distribute them in the many places around his seat and mine. “The weather is bad,” said he as he slid down his bed with his legs raised and placed upon the wooden plank in a V shape. I said, “yes.” “He continued, “Nowadays Vizag is very dirty. I hate the slums of Vizag and the people who

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live there. No hygiene anywhere. Very dirty habits. They purchase foods quite exposed, full of flies and eat in a dirty way.” I knew not how to join conversation with him. As the train travelled from the creeping darkness of the dusk into the night, he broke open packets of bread, biscuits and cakes. He opened his jam bottle and butter packets and arranged everything into quite a laboratory. Like a leisurely tiger in the forest, he finished eating within a span of about an hour and slid down again on his bed.

As the train rushed into the depths of night, we heard the voices of stormy winds rushing through our window. As we closed the metal shutters, we heard the whistles of the frowning gale. At about 8:30 PM, the train stopped and did not move for an hour. The station and the platform were not visible in the downpour of the rain in gale. With the greatest difficulty, we could understand that the train stopped at Samalkot. After an hour, it started as if against its will with a complainingly low speed. The train was limping amidst waves of speedy gale. It was really frightening when the train crossed Godavari Bridge. Before midnight, it stopped in one station and it was announced

STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

that trains would not move until further announcement. Along with others, we ventured to rush to the platform and could luckily secure sufficient number of hot idlis. It was Tadepalligudem. We brought the idlis into the compartment. While eating, we experienced the remarks of our friend that it was quite unhealthy to eat like that since the restaurants were unclean. With patience, we ate the idlis along with his remarks. After we slept and got up, we found ourselves in the same station and it was 8 AM. We had a wash and wanted to enquire if there was something to eat in the station. Luckily we had vada and idlis, which we brought and ate once again along with the remarks of our friend. True to his word, he kept off without eating anything and without even washing his face. I found that he had emptied his biscuits and bread etc., the previous night itself. At best he might be having half a bottle of jam.

The train started with a disgustingly low speed, since there were no communications and messages. By 10:30 AM, the train stopped in a small station and it was announced that it would not go further. With feeble and hungry looks, our friend peeped out to find a very small

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station without anything to eat. The watches were going round and it was 11:30 AM. A sturdy Muslim boy got into our compartment, completely drenched but with a basket covered in polythene cloth. He broke it open and exposed a heap of masala preparations, like vada and bondas. Rustic in preparation, they were hard as stones, even in their appearance. It was evident that they were prepared in the previous day and preserved. Some people ventured to purchase them in their struggle with hunger. Our friend wishfully looked at them and looked at me as if recollecting his remarks about eating. Within a wonderfully short time of five minutes, the rustic preparations were almost exhausted. My friend suddenly jumped up and purchased whatever was left in the basket. Even without washing his face or brushing his teeth, he ate every morsel of it and buried his face into the pages of a book which he opened and from which he never ventured to go out. It was evident that he had no possibility of allowing his eyes to meet mine.

THE STORY TIDE

“Doctor, we were married only two months ago. Now, within this short period of two months, we are so much attached to each other that she is not able to bear my absence at all. Gradually I found that she was growing too sensitive and nervous of anything that moved in the house. Originally, it seems she was of a strong mind but of late, she has developed a tendency to startle at everything and take every trifle as an evil foreboding. Now there is the crisis during these three days. Of course, since there is a slight delay in her periods, I suspect that she may be carrying, but it does not necessitate such a situation. During these three days, she has no wink of sleep. In fact, she seems damn afraid of sleeping,” reported Raman. The doctor asked Raman’s wife, Kamala, to sit down calmly. He placed a photo of Master C.V.V., asked her to gaze at it and fixed kumkum between her brows. She calmly slept within two minutes.

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“I don’t intend to kill you. I don’t propose to eat you though I am a man-eater. I have no alternative except to appear before you in this hideous form and tease you. Even this is against my conscience,” said the devil who stood before Kamala. The devil was having only half of its face, the other half being smashed in the form of an ugly and hideous crescent. It protruded its tongue which was half eaten away. The pot belly was having wounds and scratches here and there. The hair was cut and deformed in patches, the remaining being muddled into a mesh. Kamala woke up from her sleep with a deathly scream. The husband took her into his hands. The doctor asked him not to get worried and was successful in inducing hypnotic sleep to Kamala. Then the doctor whispered into her ears, “We do not intend to harm you in any way. Tell me who you are and what for you are teasing this young lady.”

The devil began to speak through Kamala’s lips. “It is a sad and unfortunate story. I was the mother of six children and my husband was much devoted to me. Suddenly there

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was the sea tide during the recent cyclone. I was washed off and cruelly separated from my husband and children overnight. The next morning, I visited my people without knowing that I had left my physical body. They were all in a panic. After three days, they could find my body, much disfigured. I was following them and trying to console them but I could not have a word of communion with them. I knew everything, I saw everything, but I was cut off from them, from any type of communication. Then I found that our house collapsed and my people were homeless. With great panic and sorrow, I waited to see them rehabilitated. There was the aid for rehabilitation from many sides. Money was being paid and articles being handed over for rehabilitation. There were also persons appointed to build the houses for the destitutes. Kotaiah, the father of Kamala, was among those who distributed the money. On the first day, he had done his duty properly. From the second day, he began to play with the money. He got the signatures of all the members of each family as the different heads of different families. He took off the amounts in their names and he did this with many families. From the third day

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onwards, he could hoard at the rate of thousands a day. As a result of this, some families did not receive anything at all, and they are still struggling for want of food, clothing and housing. My family is one among them. My husband and children suffered for a few days and left the village in a wretched state in search of better conditions.

Kotaiah was waiting to perform the marriage of his daughter splendorously for a long time. Now he could fix this long-wished-for match and perform the marriage with half of what he could snatch in the name of the destitutes. I waited for an opportunity. I was following my husband and children. At present, my daughter is working as a servant maid in Kamala's father-in-law's house. At the time of the marriage, my daughter was helping in decorating the bride and I found an opportunity to enter into Kamala. Now I have no ill-will for this young couple, somehow I want to teach a lesson to Kotaiah.”

Raman stood up in great veneration and moral fear, and addressed the devil: “In fact, I never wanted any dowry from Kotaiah. It was he who offered my parents an amount

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of ten thousand rupees. I am born rich and even my parents have no greed for any money through my marriage. I will immediately withdraw ten thousand rupees from the bank balance and give it to your daughter. Pray, bless us and leave Kamala.”

The doctor applied kumkum again between the brows of Kamala and said, “Namaskarams Master C.V.V.”

Words came from Kamala’s lips feebly: “I am leaving Kamala safe to you. But remember, I do not leave Kotaiah. He has to pay in terms of his suffering and repentance. No one can escape from the law and order of the inner government which is ever vigilant and ever invisible.”

Kamala woke up and said, “I am too weak.” The doctor advised a cup of Ovaltine which ended the whole trouble.

THE GRAND VISION

It was announced that all the devotees and disciples of Gurudev Pranavaswarup are invited to take a trip to all the holy places of India by a special train. Food, bath and other arrangements will be made in the train itself. Devotees will spend their time in bhajan, sankirthan and spiritual discourses while the train is moving. A mike set was arranged in the compartment where Gurudev sat. Amplifiers were connected in every other compartment. About 50 families, including ladies, children and old people, have paid the scheduled amount for expenses and joined Gurudev. The train left Visakhapatnam platform one fine morning with namasankirthan reverberating throughout the compartments. The pilgrims walked through the corridors of the compartments and fell in a queue towards the dining car, as it was time for breakfast. Puri and coffee was served sumptuously. Ramdas and his family demanded that the breakfast be brought to his compartment and served. They refused to go to the dining

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car. “Why don’t you go and have breakfast?” Nandakumar asked.

Ramdas said, “We are engaged in sankirthan. It is not for us but it is for all the party that we are doing sankirthan. Hence it is for you to see that our needs are looked after. First preference is to be given to those who are attending to the needs of the party.” Nandakumar and his wife got up and served the family of Ramdas. They brought puris in plates and coffee cups to all the members of the party of Ramdas. The party of Ramdas started eating and demanding, “Where is fresh water for drinking? Please go and get it. Learn to serve properly and remember that you are in a pilgrimage tour and not in a marriage party.” Once again, Nandakumar and his wife went and brought tumblers of drinking water.

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“Now we are in Pandaripur. Within two hours there is the car festival. You have to give preference to the members of the sankirthan party. You take care of the baggages in the train until we return from the car festival,”

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said Ramdas, getting down from the train with all the sankirthan members. Nandakumar and his wife stayed in the train to take care of the baggage of others. Ramdas and his party went out into the town. They enjoyed the splendorous scene of the car festival. They visited the temple and had darshan of Lord Pandarinath. The temple was flooded with pilgrims who fell in a line in the form of a never-ending queue. People were not allowed to stand and see the Lord leisurely since the queue was very big. Everyone was asked to do namaskar and pass before the Lord quickly. All the sankirthan members joined the queue.

Ramdas saw the Lord from a distance. He felt himself washed of all sins. Really, it was a privilege for him to see the Lord. “How many people can feel the sanctity and tranquility of the Lord in the sanctum sanctorum? In fact, they do not know the greatness of God. It requires a lot of practice in meditation and good Karma in past life,” said Ramdas to himself while looking at the Lord Pandurangavithal. As he looked into the eyes of the Lord, he felt a thrill. Sparks of light appeared to emanate from the eyes of the Lord. Sparks began to revolve before the

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face of the Lord in various patterns. He felt a feeling like that of an electric shock. He saw the sparks mix up, culminating in a cloud of dazzling light. Scenes were passing before his eyes and he closed his eyes.

A beautiful scene of Brindavan flashed to his mind. A boy of six years age playing the flute while the music came out of the holes of the flute in the form of iridescent soap bubbles. Each bubble bulged out and revolved in the form of myriads of galaxies, expanding into solar systems. An earth of a solar system was revolving and he could see the map of India and locate Pandaripur. There he saw the temple of Vithoba, all in glittering gold. The Lord in the temple smiled and came out walking into the streets. Ramdas approached him and wanted to touch the feet of the Lord. "I am in a hurry. I am going to enquire after the welfare of my devotees. If you are really interested, you can follow me and serve my devotees along with me," said the Lord. Ramdas followed him with a spirit of discontentment. Many times he wanted to bow down and touch the feet of the Lord. As the Lord took swift turns in his walk, Ramdas could touch only the sand and the

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pebbles on the way. He said, “My Lord, why do you skip away from your devotees when we are after you, waiting for you?” The Lord smiled and walked swiftly. Ramdas followed him up to the railway station. There was the train for the pilgrims waiting on the platform.

The Lord entered into the train and Ramdas followed him. The Lord was searching for someone in each compartment. Ramdas followed him. At a distance, he saw Nandakumar and his wife sitting in a corner, watching the baggage of the sankirthan party carefully. The Lord stopped at them and stood before Nandakumar and his wife. The couple stood up in veneration while the Lord offered his lotus feet before them. The couple bowed down, touched the feet with tears of joy. Ramdas also wanted to bow down but the Lord, the naughty child, pushed him aside. The Lord touched the heads of Nandakumar and his wife with his right hand, blessed them and gave them two garlands. Immediately he took them by their hands, led them out of the train and disappeared. Ramdas stood aghast in the compartment. His head reeled and there was much confusion.

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The sankirthan party found Ramdas, unconscious with suffocation and sweats, in the sanctum sanctorum. They carried him out and washed his face with cold water. Ramdas came to consciousness and found himself before the temple. “I now understand. I now realise what a pilgrimage is. I now realise who is a real pilgrim.” Saying so, Ramdas wept with joy and ran to the railway station. He approached the train, entered his compartment and saw Nandakumar and his wife watching the baggage carefully. He suddenly fell at the feet of Nandakumar and said, “I experienced the grand vision of the Lord. The light has really opened my eyes.”

ART OF DYING

The professor of metapsychology is lying on his cushioned couch with a superfine microphone arranged before his lips. The modern television set is projected upon the screen. Every sentence uttered by the professor will be translated into the corresponding scenes in technicolor instantaneously upon the screen. It is 10.30 PM on 22-3-2078. The invitees numbered in hundreds and they included men, women and children. A spray of perfume permeated the whole room with a mild, decent odour, which served as dinner to all. The professor of metapsychology, Jesus Gautama by name, cast his youthful smile through his lips, which is being translated into a feeble smile on the physical plane due to his age-old enfeeblement. He began to explain, "I am sorry, I find a necessity to project your attention upon the darker ages of the 20th century. Now that I am going to leave my old physical sheath within a few minutes, I want to make you understand how people used to dread the so-called

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phenomenon of death. Now, under my instruction and guidance, you have scientifically known what they mean by death and you got the enlightenment about the loss and gain of the physical body. But in those days, people used to dread death so much that they anticipated death on a subconscious level every minute and every second. All their understanding and their movements were tinged and conditioned by death. They felt that they had to finish off with their mundane plans before they die, because they sincerely believed that they would die. This gave them the greatest confusion possible and it caused a willful shatter of their good health.”

A big dark cloud was projected upon the screen with the words, “SORROW, FEAR, DEATH!” An 85-year-old man of the 20th century came on the screen. It is described that he was working in a big industrial firm, toiling nights and days to win the race of wealth against death. His shadow haunted him in the shape of a wolf from which he wanted to escape. The wolf frowned, “I am your agony. I am your confusion. I am your fear. I am your craze. I am

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your death. Surely I will overcome you and run before you when the sun crosses the meridian.”

“Here is another wolf,” said the professor. “The wolf of sex, invited by the man of the 20th century. He wanted to forget about his death by playing with this wolf. The wolf had a darling kid, which was in the form of the most spirited alcohol. The man of the 20th century began to play with the mother wolf and its child. They sapped him of his life and moral. There stands the sapped skeleton of 85 years of age, timid enough to call himself a man still. Sapped of all courage and conviction and left in the company of the razor-sharp edge of his intelligence. He was trying to shave his beard of the multiple hairs of fear of public opinion, ever growing in black and white. By this shaving he wants to appear younger (which of course he could never believe).”

There is an alarm signal from within the region of the old man's heart. He telephoned, “Doctor, I feel pain in my chest. I do not think that it is a fourth heart attack. Nor do I wish to believe. However, I request you to come and

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examine, but only to assure me that it is not a heart attack. Even though it is a heart attack, you treat it effectively and never reveal it to me." There came the doctor with the steth around his neck. There came the ambulance. It was a big hospital amidst the hopeful company of nurses and doctors. The old man lost his consciousness. He regained his consciousness to recognise them all and it was a short gap of the mishap, a fourth heart attack. The doctor was at a loss to understand how to report the speedy approach of death to the patient. He called his wife and children and friends and prophesied the impending death. Their faces grew mournful. With the same faces, they brought the father home and constructed a big fort of medicines around his bed. The eldest son was thinking, talking to himself, "This is really a sorrowful situation. I cannot face the death of my father before he commits everything in writing about the distribution of his wealth and before we get it registered duly in the court of law."

Professor Jesus Gautama smiled and said, "This was the hell which was faced by the fate-doomed creatures of the 20th century as they had to walk unwillingly towards

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their self-dug graves. It was all due to a bad bargain of the mind with the rotten body which is to be thrown into the junk. See how the poor creature was being pulled out of his cadaver, down from his heart and very bowels.

“Nature’s forces, misunderstood as they were in those days as the darker forces, working as Yama’s officers, had to pull the fellow against his feeble desires, out of his rotten body. The fellow had no scientific stature to realise that it was only to provide him with a better vehicle. Nor did the fellow have the goodness to understand what was good.”

The old fellow fell flat upon his cot in the midst of his mourning well-wishers. A strong whirlpool of cumulative weeps and cries pulled the fellow out of his body. The drama was over, and the stage director in the background gave a sigh of relief. The well-wishers around the body appointed themselves to clear off the junk into the fire. They decorated themselves with towels hanging over their heads as veils to serve as formal insignia of sorrow.

Professor Jesus Gautama continued, “It was the plight of those who were left behind. It was customary in those

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days that death cost them more than the occasion which brought them to earth. It was a more cruel death of those who were left behind. Now that I have invited you to witness me breathing my last, I wanted to educate you about this uncouth ignorance of the 20th century about death. Now that you are well trained by me through these four decades in the art of dying, you are hereby invited with veneration to witness the practical class of your training. I thank you all, ladies and gentlemen, for the interest you have taken to learn this art of dying and the science of death through those four decades. Now that the training is finished, it is for you to enlighten and educate the future generation. I wish you learn more before we meet again in good cheer and youthful spirit. Adieu.” The professor smiled out his last breath. There the body is lying with the stamp of his last smile on its lips.

THE PLAY OF THE LORD

“This is the age of Kali. There are many people who deceive the innocent public in the name of God,” said Kalidwamsa Swami with a smile which was graceful with his one golden tooth. He was trying to induce faith about his own path in the mind of Chalapathi, a simple-minded householder without any faith in miracles and without any doubt in the existence of God. Chalapathi stood in veneration with folded hands before Swami Kalidwamsa.

The Swami continued, “Gross deception is going on in a large scale in the name of God and rituals. You should be careful.” Chalapathi bowed down and said, “All is His play. The Lord shows His presence in many ways and men know them as good and bad. Your presence today is also a part of the play of the Lord.” Kalidwamsa grew angry and warned, “Who taught you so? Do you mean to say that everything on this earth, good or bad, belongs to God? God has given you intelligence to discriminate what is good and

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what is bad. You have to understand God's creation and keep it away from Maya, the great illusion. It is only to make you know this that godly people live in this world and come to you. You the householders are always exposed to the great dangers of Maya and it is my duty to see that the eyes of the householders are opened. Now I prove the truth of it." Saying so, Kalidwamsa stretched his hand into space and produced a handful of sugar candy, which he handed over to Chalapathi.

Chalapathi observed with a sympathetic look and said, "God gives us what is due. Before I accept this from you, I am expected to pay the cost of it." Kalidwamsa gazed at Chalapathi for a moment and said, "You are a sinner. You reject my prasada. Do you know the result? You will fall into great illusion and experience many difficulties henceforth." Chalapathi said, "All is the play of the Lord." Saying so, Chalapathi took the sugar candy, broke it into pieces and distributed it among the children playing in the verandah. Kalidwamsa grew furious and said, "You insult me by distributing my prasada to others when I favour you with it." Chalapathi said, "We, the householders, are not

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expected to eat anything before we distribute. This is what the Sastras say.”

Kalidwamsa said, “It is true with your food but it is not so with the prasad of the Lord. Good work is very difficult to perform in this Kali age. For everything, money is the keynote. We cannot do any good work without money. Unfortunately, it is the sinful ones that possess money abundantly in these days. It has become inevitable for me to amass wealth for God's work. Without miracles, these rich people do not shell down money. I want to make you the centre of my work. Ramanayya, a lakshier of this place, is foremost in the industrial circle. His daughter is 26 years old and he could not get her married. I influenced a smart young business magnate of Gudur and took promise from him that he would marry Ramanayya's daughter. Yesterday I went to meet Ramanayya and ordered him to offer his daughter to Ramesh of Gudur. They have no idea of the bridegroom but Ramanayya had to accept. I fixed up the marriage date and Muhurtham, for which Ramanayya had to give his acceptance. As a token of God’s grace, I have performed Sivapuja in Ramanayya's house with a bagful of

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charcoal pieces which turned out into beautiful flowers. Ramanayya has witnessed the miracle with his own eyes and accepted that it was the token of Siva's grace. I want to make him the president of my organization and you, the secretary. I do not wait for your consent, since I know you are my devotee.” At the end of the big discourse of Kalidwamsa, Chalapathi bowed down with folded hands and said, “All is the play of Lord.”

Swami Kalidwamsa was sitting in the bedroom of Ramanayya. Ramanayya and his wife sat on either side on the bare floor near the lotus feet of the Swami. Incense sticks were burning in silence, and after a few moments, the Swami smiled to speak out. There were knocks at the door. It was 11 PM and the street was silent. With the kind permission of the Swami, Ramanayya went and opened the door. Five stalwarts got down from a new car and entered the house, enquiring if it was Ramanayya's residence. Ramanayya was taken by surprise when one of the stalwarts went round the rooms searching for someone. As he saw the Swami in the bedroom, he said “O! You are here?” Swami Kalidwamsa grew pale and stood up without a

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single word. “How long since you know the Swami?” one of the stalwarts questioned Ramanayya. “Why? The Swami himself came down to my house and offered his presence fifteen days ago,” answered Ramanayya.

Then the stalwart said, “I am Prabhakar, Superintendent, Crime Branch. This is Mr. Ramanadham, Customs Collector, Bombay. The other three belong to the Police Dept. of the place. May I know where the Swamiji has kept his baggage?” Then Prabhakar went straight to Kalidwamsa, took his hands into his own and lifted them up. Small packets of sugar candy fell from under the Swami’s armpits. Ramanadham brought a nice air bag which he broke open. He took out two bundles of American dollar currency and many bundles of Indian currency in hundred rupee denominations. “Mr. Ramanayya, do you know what happens when these things are found in your house? The Swamiji is charitable enough to sell the hundred-rupee notes at a price of sixty rupees each. Your looks show that you are not yet initiated into the order. I wish to believe that you are not one among the inner circle of the Swamiji's Holy Order. Luckily for you, we also came

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to know about the marriage proposal of your daughter. The fellow at Gudur who you wanted to make your son-in-law has at least a wife and few children. Don't you think it wise to hand over the Swami to us silently with all his belongings of the Holy Order? Don't you understand that we are really considerate about you for your innocence? In this Kali age, God exists with people like Kalidwamsa and myself.”

The stalwarts brought Kalidwamsa with his belongings to the house of Chalapathi. They knocked at the door and Chalapathi opened, inviting all into his house. Prabhakar introduced himself and the other stalwarts and narrated the whole story to Chalapathi. In the end he questioned, “Are you not afraid of the whole situation?” “Why sir,” said Chalapathi, with folded hands, “all is the play of the Lord.”

FREEDOM MUSIC

“If I am not wrong, I saw you singing Buddha’s songs, going about the streets with a bowl to beg food grains,” Bahadur remarked.

“Yes, and something more. I am a beggar of all. I beg for Lord Buddha's path wherever I beg,” Padmaka answered.

“Then you must be a fool to distribute your food grains like this to these wild birds that gather around you. Like the many humans, these birds eat your grain and fly away,” Bahadur remarked again.

“No. They do not fly away. The earth is round. And they are bound to return to me. This is the truth which the Tathagatha revealed to us,” answered Padmaka.

Bahadur pursued, “I too feed the birds. I know what philanthropy is. I never feed the birds that eat and run away. Many a bird eats from my grain and remains loyal to me. I

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own many farmyards with towers of pigeonholes, wherein my birds live. Through generations, they are born in my pigeonholes. Right from their childhood, I feed them and as they develop wings I begin to cut their feathers. I make sure that no one of these fellows soars high enough to escape. Every evening I throw them into space. They fly round and round in short whirls and return safe to the pigeonholes, where they find their grain to eat. You feed the stray birds and you fancy that they return. What is the use of feeding those fellows who eat and go away?”

“Going away is not possible in the kingdom of the Lord of Love. They go round the room of space and they return home someday. They cannot escape since they are wedded to the earth,” Padmaka answered.

Bahadur questioned again, “When you have no control over them, how do you hope of their return to you?”

Padmaka replied, “Return to me is not the matter that counts. Can you explain how they come to me though I

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have no control over them? They come from the Buddha and they return unto him.”

Bahadur smiled and said, “When your Lord is there, why do you take pains to beg for grain and feed these wild fellows who belong to your Lord?”

“It is just as you do with your wife and children. Do you feel that you have created your wife and children? What right have you to cut their feathers and have them under your control? Your birds are always limited in number, whereas my birds cannot be counted. Don’t you find that each of your birds grows sick day by day and dies of disease, and then their number is reduced day by day?” questioned Padmaka, with a smile full of pity.

“That is the one thing which I am not able to understand. Daily I feed the birds and I wish them to increase in numbers. Instead, they are decreasing and getting sick. I am not able to find the reason,” confessed Bahadur.

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Padmaka explained, “The reason is that you possess them. I do not possess and hence all these birds are mine. They live in life, youth and health.”

Saying so, Padmaka took leave and returned to his hermitage, which was on a small hillock near the village of Bahadur. The sun gently went down the western sky and it was night. Melodious flute music softly slid down the little flute of Padmaka. As he sat down before the hermitage and played his flute, compassion began to flow down the hillock in the form of flute music. Darkness is no barrier. The message of the music permeated the dark sky and began to sway the hearts of the beings of the village. Night after night, the inhabitants of the village began to feel the footprints of Lord Buddha, spreading their tender hearts in the form of the soft music. As the inhabitants went into a trance, they could gradually learn to leave off their sway over the hearts of their fellow beings. As everyone went into the trance, they had no thoughts of the wives and

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children. Everything was the message of the music through the medium of the sound.

As Bahadur could not relish the idea of losing control over others, he tried to resist the presence of the music. Every dawn was unpleasant to him, since he could see more and more birds gathered around Padmaka when he was throwing the previous day's grains before the birds. Are they the same birds? Or new birds gather everyday around the foot of Padmaka to eat his grains and escape? Is it possible to know? One thing is certain. Every morning, Bahadur could see his wife and children losing freshness of life and going down in health. What might be the reason? He was feeding them and providing the best possible comforts and environment. He was watching their movements every minute and controlling them. He wants everyone to follow him. He can never tolerate a breach in their behavior.

It was late at midnight when Bahadur rushed to the hillock and knocked at the door of Padmaka. Agony was

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painted on Bahadur's face and he staggered while he questioned.

“My eldest son is not seen. Did you find him today? Has he come to you?” Padmaka remarked, “It seems you wanted him to marry according to your choice.”

“How do you know?” asked Bahadur.

“Your question reveals,” Padmaka replied.

Then Bahadur explained, “I gave my consent to one of my cousins about my son’s marriage with his daughter. My son refused to accept. A big discussion was going on between myself and my wife. And now I find my boy missing.”

“He will return home after finding the mate of his own choice. He fell in love with his own bride and who knows, it may be the same creature, the daughter of your cousin. Let him find his way. Tathagatha made His presence in your son to discover what was love and to seek it in a temple of flesh. Purification is the headache of Tathagatha

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and he is always ready, knocking at the door of every heart,” smiled Padmaka as he looked into the eyes of Bahadur through the darkness. Bahadur kneeled down before the feet of Padmaka and spoke in tears. “I now understand the light of your feeding stray birds and how they return to you. Show me the path. Shall I leave my wife and children and live with you in this hermitage?”

Padmaka touched the forehead of Bahadur and said, “Let your mind leave them and come to me while your body lives with them to serve Tathagatha in them. Mind is Mara and he kills you. Leave the Mara to me and I will kill him in the name of the Lord.”

LET THE LORD LIVE

“Do you know that there are one thousand, one hundred and sixty-three types of different mantras to meditate Lord Sri Krishna? Our Guru gave us only one Krishna mantra of all these. Since then, 30 years lapsed, and I began gathering the literature of Lord Krishna’s worship from the various books of Mantra Sastra. Now that we have met after 13 years, I very much wish to go through your collection of Krishna literature,” said Ramanujam with an air of triumph to Sundaram.

Sundaram said, “I am sorry, I did not gather any more mantras than the one given by our Guru to us on that day.”

Ramanujam smiled and said, “Do you meditate that mantra even daily?” “Yes, I do. Since I was inspired fully by our Guru that day itself, a light of blue shape filled my whole mind and personality. It never leaves me. Day and night, it gives its touch of bliss and peace and I live in it.

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Daily I do meditate the mantra just after taking my morning bath. The moment I begin to utter the mantra, my eyes are closed and my mind goes and merges in the cool, gentle light that is Lord Krishna. Then for a while, I do not remember if my lips utter the mantra. Still my mind goes on uttering. I very much doubt if my mind utters the syllables of the mantra one by one. What I know is that the whole mantra exists in me as myself, my own utterance lost in the presence of the sweet Lord. I do not remember how many times I utter the mantra. I do not remember how much time escapes during the process. I open my eyes when the Lord permits. This is what all I know,” said Sundaram.

“Of late, my life has grown too busy with worldly affairs. Many times I attempt to sit, close my eyes and repeat the mantra given by our Guru. Some days I make it possible to sit and meditate but with great difficulty. My mind is often preoccupied with the thoughts of my family problems and my mind is not able to get concentration

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upon the mantra. In this mundane life of ours, we meet many obstacles on the way. Hence I began to go deep into the mantra literature to find out good mantras to remove obstacles. Without knowing them, how can we clear the way and make it possible to meditate? In my quest, I could gather different types of mantras that invoke Lord Krishna,” said Ramanujam and smiled.

Sundaram questioned, “How could you complete meditation of all these mantras? You are very lucky.”

“It is not so easy to start meditating upon a mantra. It involves big rituals. Each of these mantras prescribes a ritual to perform daily for 40 days. I am trying to gather as many mantras of Krishna as possible and select one among them to make a thorough performance of its meditation with all the rituals prescribed, gathering all the herbs and the sacred material prescribed for it. Nowadays I am growing old and my body is not as healthy as it was. My mind is enfeebled due to the recent attack of jaundice and

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I am not able to concentrate. First of all, I should come to a conclusion as to which of these mantras is best.”

As they were sitting under a tree on a riverside hill and conversing, they could observe an old man with shaven head and red robe approaching them with a smile. The stranger came directly to the spot. Both of them stood up and offered their respects, touching his feet. The old man asked, “Do you remember me? If I am not wrong, you are Messrs. Ramanujam and Sundaram. Do you remember the middle-aged Swami who gave you the mantra of Krishna thirty years ago?” Ramanujam and Sundaram were stunned to see their Guru suddenly. As they settled down, Ramanujam said, ”Swami! I expect you have appeared before us by the grace of the Lord. I am in confusion about selecting the right mantra to meditate upon. You select one for me, satisfy my curiosity with reasons of Mantra Sastra.” The Swami smiled and said, “Straight is the path but narrow. I selected one already for you and gave it to you 30 years ago. But your mind seeks for something other than

LET THE LORD LIVE

the Lord. It is trying to learn about the Lord but not the Lord Himself. Anything other than the Lord is an obstacle and is worldly. Curiosity is a bottomless pit where the cloud of intuition rains down into the stinking mud of reasoning. Do it instead of learning about it. Begin to do it and you will do it. This is the way. See how Sundaram stood in the Lord during these thirty years. He has been doing and you have been thinking of doing. Stop travelling across the desert of quest. Enter the sweet lake of your presence and take a dip of the Lord's presence in it. Then you will see that there is nothing but His presence."

Ramanujam touched his feet once again and said, "Really I have wasted thirty years in my quest across the desert." The Swami smiled and said, "The very thought that you have wasted thirty years is another gush of wind throwing the sand of the desert into your eyes once again. To repent for one's own past is very pious but it only creates some more time to repent for afterwards. Leave off your thoughts about anything and everything and begin to exist

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in the Lord.” Ramanujam folded his hands in veneration and implored, “Master, give me the strength and courage to follow what you say.”

The Swami said, “You are speaking of strength and courage. But I am speaking of the Lord. He includes all. All includes strength and courage. So leave the thought and live in the Lord.” Ramanujam implored again, “Master, what you say is straight and effective. I can see. But how to begin?” The Swami said, “Do not begin. Think of the Lord. Utter the name of the Lord. Live in the Lord. Do not begin to live. Let the Lord live in you. Empty your thoughts and submit yourself to Him So that He lives in you.”

THE WHITE MAGIC

The magician entered ceremoniously the hall of magnificence. The whole building consisted of seven rooms but anyone who entered the hall felt that it contained fourteen rooms. It was because of the mirrors so wonderfully arranged. The magician wanted to show the hall to someone and exhibit the wonders of it, explain to him the procedure as to how to enter the hall and how to make an exit. To his surprise, he found no one except himself to explain. He waited and waited and at last, he entered the building single and it was with a curiosity to take delight in his own work. Luckily, he found someone as he entered. Then he began to explain.

“Here is the first hall and you find in this room the designs of the bricks, the adhesives and the models of doors, windows and mirrors. Out of this material the whole edifice has been erected. I spent ten full months to design

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the whole thing and make proper arrangement for the erection of this hall of magic. How do you feel about this first room?” The stranger tried to express his feelings, but the magician did not care to heed. He went on explaining as he led the stranger into the second room.

“This is all about the wonder of carpentry. You can see the excellence of the seasoning of the wood and the dexterity of polishing it. How do you appreciate the various designs of this work?” The stranger tried to express his feelings but the magician did not heed. He went on explaining as he led the stranger into the third room.

“This is the wonderland of my engineering. Here you find certain instruments with which you can communicate. You speak, it speaks. You question something and it answers. You can discuss various topics with this machine. The calibre of this machine changes in tune with your I.Q. Here is another machine. Look through this and you can see whatever you wish to see. The beauty of what you see depends upon your concept of beauty. Here is a third and

THE WHITE MAGIC

wonderful machine. You can listen to beautiful music but you have to make a beginning before you can enjoy. You begin to sing and it begins to sing. Whatever song you can mentally sing, you can listen with your ears. The sweetness of the music depends upon your concept of music. How do you appreciate?" Before the stranger tried to express his views, the magician went on to the next topic.

"Be careful. Here is a room which makes you forget your identity. As you enter the room, you will exist but you do not exist to yourself. Everything exists to you except yourself. You can eat, drink, dance, speak and enjoy, but you cannot know that you are existing. This happens as long as you stay in this room. The moment you come out of the room, you will gather yourself once again and recollect who you are. But the problem is that you do not know how to escape. This is because you do not remember yourself. How to come out of this room is the only problem when once you entered, but do not get frightened. I know the secret about the exit. As long as you are awake, you do

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not remember yourself. When once you are exhausted and fall into sleep, you will be out of the spell. I have arranged things in such a way that a higher spirit calls you from outside and awakens you as soon as you go into sleep. I am warning you beforehand. This room has three more wonderful rooms within itself. The deeper you delve into each of them, the more difficult it is for you to make an exit, until you get exhausted and go into sleep.” Saying so, the magician entered into the wonderful room of Lethe along with his stranger friend.

As he entered, the magician himself forgot about his own existence. He was not at all conscious that he existed and he was going on explaining things to his stranger friend. “Do you remember that you existed? Do not forget about this as you begin to observe the contents of this room.” The stranger wanted to say something but the magician did not heed. He was busy with the wonderful arrangement of his own chamber, through the windows of which he could observe vast lawns, the expanse of the skies

THE WHITE MAGIC

above, the below and lo! the beautiful array of mountains with foliage thick and variegated. The breeze through the window brings the alluring perfume of the hill and vale. Soft music is being heard and various little beings dance on top of trees and the surface of the waves of the ocean. Dancing herds of nymphs, gnomes, sylph and salamanders are seen. Moon is dancing along the ebb and tide of the emerald droplets of the ocean. Plants and creepers and herbs are tossing their heads to the gentle breeze in moonlight. There is a beautiful footpath in the meadow. Lord Krishna comes down to earth with his flute music. Many hundreds of cowherd girls gather around Him in patterns and designs of various flowers in the forest. The globe of earth rotates in tune with the flute music. The planets and the galaxies, myriads of stars are twinkling and melting into stardust and darkness.

The magician shouted, “Beware of yourself. Remember that you exist. Do not forget about yourself.” Saying so, the magician ran up and down the room and

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entered into the second and third rooms, wherefrom he could not escape. He could take care of the stranger friend but he could not remember his own existence. He was utterly deceived by his own seal of magic. There was no stranger at all in the room except himself. It was all a phantom of his own reflection in the mirror, which he thought was a stranger. Now he was alone in the room shouting to his own reflection, “Do not forget about your own existence.”

So the magician lost himself in the skillfully created labyrinth of his central hall. Thus he willed and hence he fell into the spell of his own will. He was going round and round in the room, shouting to his own image. “My friend, do not forget about your own existence.” For aeons of time, he went round and round and fell into sleep, exhausted. Immediately a star blazed outside the hall, before the entrance. An angel of light came down to earth on his wings and alighted on the grounds before the hall. He raised his hands and shouted, “O! Lord of the Grand

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Magic! The Architect of this Hall! The Grand Geometrician and Most High! Awake. Awake. You have enough fooled yourself with your own magic. The pity is you take delight in doing so. Awake, my Lord! What to speak of your wonderful skill in creating me, your servant outside the hall to awaken you once again and show you the way out. Your skill is boundless.” With these words, the magician awoke and came out of the hall straight to the messenger. He smiled and said, “See how I planned to recollect Myself.”

NADI GRANTH

“Long time since I have been trying to meet you and have your darshan.”

“What’s the matter?”

“Nothing. It is only to pay my respects to you, Sir.”

“Nothing is also an entity. Always something comes out of nothing. Now tell me. What's the matter with you?”

“I have heard much about you, Sir, and your powers of prediction.”

“So you want a prediction. By the by, do you know that I am not a believer of prediction? Even then, if you want a prediction from me I do predict.”

“Please do it, Sir. I have been trying to start a cine production and produce some class pictures. I have taken my own share of Rs. 80,000/- from my father and now I am thinking of leaving for Hyderabad. With this money and

the help of my friends, I want to start my production, for which I seek your prediction.”

“A real production needs no prediction. I do hope that astrology is not the cause of your proposal. But still I do predict since you have asked me. But I do it with common sense and call it astrology for your satisfaction. A layman with a surgeon’s paraphernalia cannot conduct surgery. This is common sense. Hence I predict that you are not going to start cine production. You will be quite successful but only in spending Rs. 80,000/- and returning home. I predict this because you are a layman in the cine field. I do not care for your feelings since I care more for your happy and discrete retreat,” said Mohan, looking into space with an air of seriousness.

“Many eminent astrologers have already predicted that I would be a successful producer,” said Chandrarao, looking vacantly through his gold-rimmed crescent sunglasses.

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“A successful producer of what? It may be your own story with a limited number of children. Afterwards your story may serve the purpose of a movie for some other producer. If you need my advice, do not go in for cine production. You can better eat away and drink Rs. 80,000/- ,” answered Mohan, in a serene way.

* * * *

“My dear sir, I have made all arrangements at Hyderabad to start my own production. “

“So, you broke the coconut. Did you consult a good astrologer for an auspicious moment to break? Otherwise, the coconut is a hard nut to be cracked. Now tell me how far you have progressed.”

“I have taken a spacious building for my office. I have registered the office under the name of Aswini Productions. Now many people approach me for jobs and minor roles in a picture. I interviewed all of them and made

a scrutiny of the individual cases. I want to have a selective way of doing things,” explained Chandrarao.

“Your office has many girls as employees. The almirahs in your office contain many costly bottles. Your evenings are busy running late into the night. Many friends gather with you in the evening and get parties arranged by you. This is how I predict. See, it is sheer common sense and no astrology. Astrology carries soothsaying with many sweet and encouraging plans, while common sense carries sometimes ruthless phrases as facts,” said Mohan with a grunt.

* * * *

“Good morning. And now the third phase. It is because we meet for the third time. I now, predict, rather, ‘postdict’, that you have come away from Hyderabad, after winding up the tent around your pole. Is it so?”

“Of course, but everything went against my expectation. Everyone deceived me and swindled me.”

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“Otherwise I would have called them fools. They are bound to do so. This is because they found a reasonable environment and a fertile field. All of them follow their own profession and you are the only exception. Of course, I can better attribute these things to Saturn, Mars or Rahu to make things appear more reasonable and palatable for you to swallow, but since the theme is a total tragedy, I do not find any grain of beauty in garbing the screenplay in sugar-coated language. But anyway, I could understand the cause of the whole thing,” smiled Mohan.

“If you know the cause, my dear Sir, please explain it to me,” said Chandrarao with a pale face. He added, “Let me know the cause clearly.”

“After it is too late. But what is the use? When I told you in the beginning itself, you were pleased to behave in a way otherwise than wise,” smiled Mohan.

“Please explain it to me, Sir. Is it because I arranged many parties in the nights to please the company of my false friends?”

“No, Sir. It is because you too got deep drunk with them. Also because you happened to be the son of an orthodox Brahmin. But, my dear Sir, this is not the real cause. Many people spend money in drinking, though they are born to orthodox Brahmins. It doesn't matter much because it amounts to only a loss of high birth. It cannot be the real cause,” smiled Mohan.

“Is it because I engaged too many ladies in my office?” asked Chandrarao.

“No. The real cause is that you got yourself involved with them. I wanted to predict all these details to you, but I feared an auto-suggestion working in you through my prediction. Even this, of course, is not the real cause.”

“Then is it my inefficiency?”

“No, because you are not new to it.”

“Then is it my lack of experience in the field?”

“No, because I have already predicted it beforehand.”

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“Then what is the real cause of my failure? I pray you tell me.”

“Now I will explain to you. A friend of yours had borrowed Rs. 80,000/- from you in your previous birth and he never cared to repay. Now you are born as his son and you have realised the amount. All the theme of your production was only to grab the amount from that fellow. If you cannot believe my words I can prepare a few stanzas of the same story in Tamil or in Sanskrit and read it out to you with names in the name of Nadi Granth.” Saying so, Mohan smiled in his usual way.

MARRIAGES ARE MADE IN HEAVEN

“I want a few minutes with you to consult about my domestic problems. When can I find time?”

“Right now because my time is not at my disposal.”

“Do you believe, Sir, that marriages are made in heaven?”

“I do believe, but not as you believe. Heaven means God's will and it works through the tendencies and behaviour of individuals. Behaviour is the product of their previous habits of thinking, doing and moulding. The habit-forming nature is the one which stores seeds of past tendencies and releases them to be germinated into actions to bear fruit. All this is the fun of God, because his work runs through these tendencies without being the least affected by them. The position of the planets and stars at

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the time of birth makes a pattern which provides the expression of life to the individuals. Two persons coming together should have mutually supplementing patterns. The pattern-forming is there in heavens and choice is there in us. Marriages are made in heaven but the duty of finding the heavenly married couples and bringing them together into the social earth-plane marriage is the duty of the human individuals,” I replied.

“I have a daughter who is twenty-two years old. I could not get her married yet. I am bringing many matches but no one is being materialised.”

“Yes, it is because only one will be materialised. Anxiety blurs your perception to the facts before you. Wait and pick up according to fitness. Generally, people confound various factors with the essentials. This is the cause of worry and sometimes delay. When everyone in the family feels his or her importance and tries to assess the bridegroom by interviewing him threadbare, then things go astray and you miss the required situation. This is how the

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matter is delayed. If you can eliminate this aspect, along with the financial factors, you can easily pick up the couple that is married in heaven,” I answered.

Then again the stranger continued, “Here are the two horoscopes which are under consideration at present. The elders of both the families propose to meet tomorrow and discuss. I want your opinion about the compatibility of the horoscopes.”

“Let not the elders discuss and decide before the boy and the girl talk to each other and give their impressions. Give prime importance to their selection and mould the other things accordingly.”

“But it is not the custom in our families. All the elders should work out the pros and cons, examine the boy and decide. Unfortunately, we cannot avoid this,” he said.

“You, yourself, say ‘unfortunately’. Everyone will have his own point of view. Do not forget that the boy and the girl have their own points of view. Let them decide for

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themselves and you, being the parent, help them to have right decisions. My knowledge of astrology says that the temperaments of these two horoscopes do not suit each other. Moreover, the appointed time of marriage in heavens does not tally with each other. Even then, I wish to leave the final decision to the couple.”

* * * *

The stranger came to me again on the fourth day and said that the elders had discussed and decided upon getting the couple married. He expressed a great sigh of relief since he felt his burden of responsibility removed from his head. However, I said, “The spirit of understanding the situation is not good. Performing the marriage should be an accomplishment, not a shifting of the burden. Avoiding is no solution to a situation, especially when there is no problem as yet. If we allow it to become a problem, it returns to us with doubled vehemence.” Evidently he was not convinced. At the end of two months, during which period they had prolonged discussions about the money

MARRIAGES ARE MADE IN HEAVEN

aspect of marriage, etc., they could come to the conclusion that the couple was to be married. Auspicious Muhurtham was fixed and the marriage was performed. I too was invited and attended to offer my good wishes and presentation.

* * * *

“The main difficulty is that the boy does not seem to appreciate our goodness. We are ready to help him in many ways. We have recommendations for him to get a decent job at Bombay. I have friends in high positions who feel very happy to give a lift in life to my son-in-law. The fellow does not seem to understand what I say. Even his parents and elders are very adamant. They say that the boy is not pleased with the girl, that too after the marriage.”

“But before the marriage you did not care to understand the same point. Then it was only a situation and not a problem. Now, after the incident, it has grown into a problem. Often problems require more valuable

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recompensations before they are solved, that too solved badly and imperfectly.”

The stranger continued, “But what to do now? I felt that my daughter was destined to marry this fellow and I said that marriages were made in heaven. Somehow we are trying to make him understand the situation and lead a happy life.”

* * * *

After nine months, the stranger approached me and asked if I could examine the horoscope of his daughter to find out how the marital happiness would be. Then I said that the real marriage of his daughter which was made in heaven was not picked up by the parents. Hence the marital life cannot be assessed until she is married according to the marriage in heaven. In the present situation, she may lead an unmarried life throughout, waiting for the proper marriage in the next birth. He could not understand what I meant. He complained that his son-in-law was trying to remarry and effect a divorce against his daughter before

MARRIAGES ARE MADE IN HEAVEN

getting himself remarried. It was known that he was attracted to a girl, one of his colleagues long before his present marriage took place. He said he was not getting good sleep in the nights since he was greatly disturbed.

Six months later the stranger came to me and informed that his son-in-law was living with the girl he liked, waiting for a legal separation. He said, “After all, what is going to happen will happen. The planets are more powerful than our plan. I am unfortunate in having such a good and unlucky daughter. My previous Karma led me to perform such a marriage to my daughter. I once again repeat that marriages are made in heaven.”

MAN SACRIFICE

“My name is Ranjan. My wife is Ramani. We were married some ten years ago and we have three children, two daughters and one son. We came to this ghat-jungle to enjoy some respite. I have been working as the branch manager of an industrial firm. We have no property. I have with me in my purse a sum of about Rs. 600/-. My wife has another Rs. 300/- with her. You take this and our belongings and set us free. I appeal to your mercy and compassion.”

“It is not for money or valuables that our people assaulted you,” said Bhootal, the king of the cave, sitting on a small throne before the footstool of the statue of Goddess Kali, unimaginable in size and frowning frightfully with her protruded red tongue between four curved fangs. We are not thieves. Nor are we robbers. Remember I am the king of this hamlet. Tomorrow will be the festival of man sacrifice, which is an annual feature. No

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one can escape from our grip. Your wife is in the neighboring cave, safe with my queen and her attendants.”

With pale face and parched lips, Ranjan questioned, “Is there no alternative?”

“You try to suggest if you can,” the king said.

“If your lordship permits, I can stay with you in your service along with my wife.”

“Then what about your three children?”

Ranjan blinked.

“Can you suggest a better alternative?” The king smiled.

“Can we bring substitutes to you and get ourselves relieved?”

“Yes, if at all we permit you to go out and bring the substitutes. Even then, you cannot find a worse fool who serves as your substitute. Listen to me. We want only one human being, not both of you. Take one hour time to decide if you offer yourself or your wife to the Goddess. You must know this is a great opportunity, which many people cannot

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get. The grace of the Mother is showered only upon the chosen.” Saying so, the king left them to the attendants and went away.

* * * *

“So, you have decided to offer yourself to the Holy Mother, and set your darling free?” the queen asked Ramani, appreciating her for the spirit of love towards her husband.

“Can I see Ranjan once before the Mother takes me into Her lap?” asked Ramani, pitifully. The queen said, “Yes, but from a distance. You cannot exchange sentences with him. You can see your three children also from a distance. They will be brought before you, if you can give us your home address.” Ramani pondered over the matter for a while and said, “No.” The queen instructed her attendants to give a holy bath of perfume to Ramani and get her decorated in fine costly silks. Many types of delicious food and drinks were brought to her, which Ramani declined. She was asked to sleep along with the queen in her royal bed.

MAN SACRIFICE

“What about your king?” Ramani questioned. The queen said, “We are celibates for the past ten years. You are my newly-born child this night. You need not fear anything untoward, as long as you are with me. Here is the increasing moon peeping through the mountain hole, shedding his moon beams upon my bed. The position of the bed is daily changed with the angle of the sun beams and the moon beams.”

* * * *

“You promised to set me free, my Lord. And you bring me into this cave of darkness. What is your real intention? Can I leave hope of my survival and understand that yours is a false promise?” Ranjan questioned the darkness of the cave, with a vacant heart. The voice of the king is heard through the darkness: “Yes. You can lose hope of all survival. When anyone requests to be set free at the cost of his wife, he will be killed. If a lady wants to go free at the cost of her husband, she too will be killed. This is according to the code of our Holy Mother.” The king said again through the darkness, “I know your mind. Now it is no use,

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even if you request that your wife should be set free. Your dear wife is also put to the same test by the queen, my spouse.” Ranjan questioned eagerly, “What did she say? Is she safe? Will she be allowed to live or face the same fate as that of mine?” The king’s voice laughed in the darkness. It said, “The results of your joy will not be easily published, my boy! Now, according to your attitude, you have no chance of knowing the results at all. We know the psychology of the educated modern humanity. Life is the one thing they love, that too, their own life and hence they lose it. Poor creatures of competitive education, you are self-doomed. Had your parents initiated you into the code of the Holy Mother, you would all have been safe. Those who want life will be killed. Those who die will be reborn. Before dawn, your head will be cut abruptly and thrown at the feet of the Mother. This is only to give you a speedy rebirth into a new life, when you can willingly offer yourself to save your wife.

“I do a favour to you. I take all precautions to see that you do not feel the pain when your head is cut. Since it will

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be cut off abruptly in the darkness, you will not feel the pain. By the by, have you ever prayed in your life?” Ranjan replied with a feeble voice: “Yes. We conduct congregational prayers in my house. We are ardent devotees of Sri Lalita. Every Friday, we offer coconuts and plantains, along with good quantities of sindoor, turmeric and flowers.” The king's voice was heard again in the darkness. “The Mother Goddess? What a pity. What is it that you can offer to Her when you are not ready to offer your life for the sake of your wife? There is nothing in this world which can please the Mother by offering. She is greater than anything in this world and hence there is no scope of pleasing Her by offering coconuts and plantains which you eat after the puja. Now be satisfied with what you could offer. Numerous are the sands of time. Can you offer to the Mother all you know till now about your education, your belongings, finally about yourself? As long as human creatures of your intentions exist, am I not justified in worshipping the Mother with annual human sacrifice? I feel I ought to repeat this sacrifice monthly or weekly. By seeing you, I feel I am justified. I am leaving

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the place and leaving you forever. May you inherit a better and enlightened life. Await Mother's orders. Farewell.”

“I could never imagine that you are so lucky as to see your mother once again, my little ones. Do come near me and embrace me. They made all preparations to kill me and offer me to the Mother. That night, I was highly honoured by the queen. Throughout the night, the queen was with me in her bed, initiating me into the many good passwords of life,” said Ramani in her ecstasies. Her three children embraced her and wept for joy. “But where is our Papa?” asked her son, the little Govind. The mother answered, “He is safe. But you can see him only after three years. I am sorry to say that it is all due to his foolishness.”

DEVILS IN THE HOUSE

“May all the beings of earth live in happiness and may I worship them all as the forms of my Lord.” Saying so, Raghu opened his eyes and loosened his tight fit Padmasana on the tiger skin. No sooner had he opened his eyes that he saw his wife taking the matchbox from the puja mandir to start cooking in the kitchen. His face grew wild like that of a wolf and he bawled out, “You ugly devil. Why don’t you die? I told you a thousand and one times not to take anything from my shrine room. If I see you touching anything in this room once again.....”. He produced sounds of his grinding teeth and waved his fist before her face. The puja was complete.

And the next day “OM Bhuvuhu – Om Bhuvaha – Om Suvaha.” Raghu was sanctifying the room with his chantings. He sat on the throne of his Padmasana upon the tiger skin and closed his eyes. His four-year-old son, Balakrishna, silently approached the altar and stole a big

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lump of sugar candy placed upon the altar to be offered to Lord Krishna. “Papa, the prasad is sweet. Is it not?” said the boy, eating the sugar candy and patting the back of his father with his saliva-sticky left hand. Raghu opened his eyes and lo! a thousand lightnings of fire from his eyes and a thousand thunderbolts from his voice! “You stupid, I told you I would crush your head if you came into this room.” In the meanwhile, Raghu's wife rushed there to take the boy away. Trembling with fear, her voice uttered, “Why, I only wanted to be careful. Just now he escaped my sight. Do not be angry. I will take away the boy and see that he will never enter the room once again.”

The husband's voice roared, “That you can never do before you die. You rustic boor, I told you ten thousand times. Now my tranquility is spoiled by the two devils in the house. It is the case every day. This is not a house. This is a burial ground.” Saying so, Raghu closed his eyes and once again began to chant holy mantras for the glory of the Lord. “May the Lord Balakrishna be pleased by my puja and shower his blessings upon all.”

DEVILS IN THE HOUSE

And now third day..... “I offer holy bath to the Lord with camphor and sandalwood oil.” Raghu is showering holy water upon the beautiful image of Balakrishna while chanting the mantras. Today he is sure of his tranquillity, since he bolted the door inside. The two devils cannot enter the shrine now. Suddenly he heard three knocks at the door. In great tension and fury, he got up from his interlocked Padmasana and opened the door. With pale face, the wife said, “Two gentlemen want to meet you urgently. What should I say?” “Ask them to die. You too die with them.” Saying so, he rushed to the main door of the house and saw two people standing. All his fury fled away and the face of the hypocrite Raghu smiled like that of a cat before a pot of milk. He talked to them for half an hour, sent them away, bolted the door inside and returned. “They are my friends who play cards in our team during the night. However, they are not so important as my Lord in my shrine room. You must learn to tell them that I am in my puja and you should send them away. Do not knock the door whenever Tom, Dick and Harry come. When do you learn? From tomorrow, do not knock the door even if our prime minister

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comes.” Saying so, he rushed to the puja room, bolted the door and sat in meditation.

And now the fourth day..... Once again, three knocks at the door, hurried, horrible loud knocks. So he rushed to the door. He opened the door and saw his son Balakrishna, who said, “Papa, my sugar candy is inside. I want to take and eat.” Raghu was in doubt if he would crush the boy into a lump of chutney. Before that, the wife rushed and said, “Your office peon is waiting at the door to convey an urgent message from your officer.” Meek as a lamb, Raghu crept to the verandah to know what it was. He had to attend the office immediately.

That night, Raghu had no sleep. He was thinking of all the impediments to his puja. Daily he is disturbed. Things go beyond his control. There may be devils in the house. Or something wrong in the construction of the house itself. Or it may be that Mars is passing over his birth Moon. Yes, Mars is more powerful than God. He has to bribe Mars with propitiation, to avoid disturbance. Or it may be true that there is something radically wrong in his birth horoscope

DEVILS IN THE HOUSE

itself. Sometimes, he thinks that the town in which he lives may not be suitable for his prosperity. Thoughts fly like wasps within his skull. “What is all this, my Lord? My wife, my son, my friends, my office peon and my officer—are all of them devils? It is impossible to imagine. I pray you solve the riddle. All these frail beings are powerful enough to disturb my services to you?” Saying so, he folded his eyes and offered the riddle to the Lord. Sleep came upon his eyes and he had a dream.

It was Brindavan, where little flower creepers are gently nodding their heads to the breeze that brings sandalwood perfume. Moon smiles in the skies and sends crumbs of his smiles as moon beams. Peacocks dance, cuckoos sing and parrots chirp. Flute song is heard from the distance. Someone enters, it may be Lord Krishna Himself. No, it is the wife of Raghu, smiling and dancing. Her hair was combed upwards, she wore a peacock tuft upon a golden crown. She bears the divine flute in her hands and plays upon it, giving celestial music. Then his son came down the meadow with a lump of sugar candy in

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one hand and the divine flute in the other. He wears the peacock tuft on his head and dances in good tune. Then the office peon comes. He has garlands around his neck and jewel stones are sparkling on his chest. He has the beautiful little brow mark, the kasturi tilak. His delicate bangled hands bear the divine flute and he too sings the celestial music. Then the officer comes. He is clad in his usual suit but there is the peacock tail on his head. He bears a conch in his left hand and the divine wheel, Sudarsan, in his right hand. He is four-armed and he bears a flute in the other two hands, from which he is giving the celestial music. All the four went round Raghu in a circle dance. It is Rasalila and nothing else. They smiled and said, “Impediment is in your mind. Remove it. Offer it to Him. I am here, everywhere and in everyone. There is nothing which is not Myself. Do not live in yourself. Offer yourself to Me, I am in you, you are in Me.”

THE HOLY PROCESSION

Prabhu, the life-long celibate, sat on his recumbent easy chair, his legs hanging down and toes touching the ground. He was leaning back with head on the pillow and was reading a handy book, wide open. The book was lifted by his two hands and he was reading with rapt attention. Now and then, he smiled to himself, rejoicing in the conversations of Hanuman and Sri Rama. It was Kishkindha Kanda in Ramayana. At very long intervals, he stopped reading for a few moments and was peeping through the small doorway of his hermitage, which was a round cottage of palmyrah leaves on top of the hill. The hill was thick with the verdant green of thickly grown maize fields cultivated on the mountain by the hill tribes, his disciples. The cones of well-grown maize appear painted by an artist on the clear blue background of the sky. Now and then, a little bird dove over the heads of the cone, stealing a seed or two. This was the scene he enjoyed when

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he peeped through the doorway from his recumbent posture.

When he was immersed in the poetic imagery of Valmiki, something crawled upon his big toe touching the ground. He stopped and looked below. A black wiry chap of about 40 years was crawling like an unfolding cobra and touching his lotus feet. Another chap of about 50 years, sturdy and dark in complexion, stood at a distance. Both of them were clothed in thick Khadi. The one who was standing directed the one who was crawling, “Fall upon his holy feet. Catch hold of the feet tight. Do not leave until Guruji promises that he will save you.” The one crawling obeyed implicitly and said, “Guruji! I won’t leave your feet. You should promise me that you will save me.”

Prabhu smiled and said, “Hanuman is speaking. He will always save the rightful and crush the sinful wherever he finds. You get up and tell me in what way you will be saved.” Then the crawling man sat down at the feet and spoke slowly, pressing the feet of Prabhu. “Guruji, my name is Appalakonda; I was promoted as tahsildar of

THE HOLY PROCESSION

Narsipatnam. People grew jealous of me. Many of them reported against me, accusing me of being guilty of bribe. The present collector conducted enquiries and sent me suspension orders. He is your ardent disciple. You have to tell him and save me. I am a man of many children and a wife.”

* * * *

“Guruji, I am at your feet long since, receiving your blessings time and again. Now I come to you since I want to serve my people. I contest in the coming elections. I want you to bless me with all your power of Tapas and see that I am successful. One more thing—all the chief politicians of our area are your disciples. You should command them to help me.”

* * * *

“Guruji, I am fed up with this Samsara. My brother and widowed mother refuse to distribute the property. I want to take away my lot of my father’s property and start my own business in competition with my brother, who is a dirty fellow. With all my heart’s devotion, I invite you to

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come to my house and command my brother and mother to distribute the property.”

In the meanwhile, the old lady in the kitchen of the hermitage went into a fit of cough and swooned. Prabhu rushed into the kitchen and brought her to the front room. He kept her flat, sprinkled water upon her face and made her sip a few ounces of milk. She recovered and sat up. In low and feeble voice, she said, “Guruji, it seems my lease of life comes to an end. There is no greater privilege for me than the fact that I served your feet during these three decades. Now that age and disease sit on my shoulders like two devils, I am not able to cook and serve for all these people who come to see you. My hands and feet grope to continue the duty as long as my breath continues in my chest. But the time is nearing and I wish your grace should come to me soon.” Prabhu’s eyes grew wet with tears. He said, “This is all due to your sin of living in my service. It would have been better for you, had you died of poverty and helplessness thirty years ago. It is only hell and not grace that I brought upon you by making you serve these

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selfish leeches who suck my blood off my feet in the name of my devotees. Vanity, it is all vanity. Vanity cannot be better though it is cloaked with piety. Now, it is my duty to serve you. You take rest during the few remaining days or weeks you live. I cook for you and all these devils since I cannot stop the game. I started the drama of devils and the characters will never permit me to drop the curtain in the middle.” Prabhu cooked food with all the items and served all the chelas who attended that day. The tahsildar, the businessman and the politician ate, along with many others, the prasad from the hands of Guruji.

The devotees were gulping the tasteful dishes the Guruji had prepared. One middle-aged sturdy lady who was eating put forth her desire. “Guruji, is it a sin to live in Samsara amidst husband and children? I do not like the way in which my husband and his two widowed sisters live. There was not a single day when we lived happily. He never fulfils any one of my wants. It is time for me to follow the path of Vairagya. I am forcing my husband to give half of his property to my only son. I have five acres

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of wetland which my mother gave me. I will transfer this also to my son and come here to serve you. If you put your holy feet once in my house and see that my husband executes the deed, I will follow you to your Ashram and spend the rest of my life at your feet. Now that this old lady has grown weak, it is evident that she will not live long.”

That evening, Prabhu staggered as he went out into the fields. His head reeled and he was about to fall. However, he gathered himself and returned to the hermitage. Of late, he is suffering from blood pressure due to the constant harassment of the disciples. From a distance, he could recognise a Girijan politician who was approaching the hermitage. He was a member of parliament and the only man who knew Telugu alphabets in his village. He approached Prabhu and said, “Guruji, you seem not doing well. I told you many a time that these people are selfish. They do not consider anything about your rest and comfort. It is absolutely necessary that you should not allow them to tease you like this. They should be within their limits. By the by, I have constructed my new house in the valley and

THE HOLY PROCESSION

it is almost complete. I now come to request you to come there and place your holy foot in my house, then only I prefer to enter.”

That night, the Guruji saw a feeble torch climbing up the mountain in the dark night. He stood gazing. The light approached the hermitage and it was the young doctor who came to see Prabhu. He sat with Prabhu lonely and said, “My Master, please permit me to take care of your health. Shower your grace upon me so that I can demand you take rest and follow my course of treatment.” Tears escaped the eyes of Prabhu without the notice of anyone in the darkness. He said, “My little angel of love, I now confess. All my life is taken away by these ignorant venomous bipeds. They are as selfish as to not to understand how to use me for their own benefit.” The doctor said, “Guruji, do not travel tomorrow. Postpone everything for two weeks.”

The Girijan politician physically carried Prabhu into his car and had his holy desire fulfilled. The next day there was a big procession of hundreds of cars and pedestrians. It was the funeral of Prabhu.

OUR CLASSROOM

Suddenly Mani and Raman felt their existence. They did not remember if they existed previously. Suddenly the school bell was heard and they came to their senses. The class was finished, the hands of the watch reached their destination and the teacher made his timely exit from the classroom. All stood up and so too Mani and Raman.

“Today’s class was wonderful,” said Raman.

“As it is every day,” smiled Mani.

“I have taken full notes of the explanation given.”

“I could not do so. This is because I was taking full notice of all that was being imparted.”

“You seem to have a tape-recorder in you. I notice this many times,” said Raman, screwing his pen into the cap.

“I have a recorder in myself without a tape. This is because I am my own recorder,” said Mani, clipping his pencil to his pocket. They came into daylight from within the classroom, which was underground. “Strange! I didn’t

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remember all through whether we were in day or night. Now it is just afternoon, but I was thinking that it was night when the class was going,” said Raman, stepping down the school building. “Yes. It was night to everything except to what was being imparted. It presented its presence to the exclusion of any other thing,” answered Mani.

They were walking in the lawn. Mani suddenly stopped and touched the head and shoulders of Raman, as he spoke, “I am not able to believe my own eyes. Is it true or is it a dream? I find you thoroughly changed in your appearance. All your hair has turned grey. In the morning, when we came to the class, you were normal. Your hair was dark.”

“My God! I find the same with you. Within the duration of our class, your hairs have turned completely white. You too look white like an old man. First of all, this lawn was not there when we came to the class. This school building is all changed. Now it is quite a big building. Our premises is changed. Where are we?”

The hostel bell was given and all students were entering the dining hall in an array. Mani and Raman also

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followed others. They had their night meal and were led to their rooms, where they soon fell asleep. In the morning they got up. Each found himself in his own room. They did not know where they were. Each of them wanted to meet the other but they did not remember anything. They did not recollect even their names and the name of the other. Each of them was led to the classroom, where they met each other. They smiled to each other but they did not remember their identity. They went and sat down in the classroom. The hands of the watch reached their destination when it was time. The teacher duly entered the classroom and greeted the pupils with a smile. He began to teach.

“You know only that I am your teacher. I am more than that. I am a hypnotist and a magician. My teaching methods are all vitally practical and they need magic, ceremonial magic. You know my teaching only but you are undergoing the transformation of a great sacrament which I framed. This room, this classroom underground serves the purpose of your mother’s womb. The flight of steps is contrived in such a fashion that you are led through a passage into the womb of your mother every day. As long as you sit in my

OUR CLASSROOM

classroom, you are in your embryonic stages of development. Time is scaled according to the strange watches you wear. Hours and minutes in your classroom have the duration of years and decades outside. Each day in our classroom equals a span of one year outside. But for this method you have no other way to learn all the secrets of the universe and yourself. You find that the walls of our classroom have the painting of the solar system with the planets, their satellites and the beings in them. This is how the egg in the mother's womb is contrived. It contains the scales and measures of time. This is the reason why you don't find your outside world. You don't find your parents, you don't even remember to find them. All the objective span of life with all its details of your birth, growth, daily routine, food and sleep, form but an automatic rotation of the machine which we call the world. If I were to permit you to notice all that and remember, do you know what happens? You will fall into the lot of those who spend their energy and mind unnecessarily for the same routine.

“See how people travel speedily into death every minute and second, to earn their livelihood. See how the

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wheels of their mental vehicle run in stunning speed, without touching the ground. They know that their children grow to read and learn, still they wreck their brains to get their children educated. They know that their children attain age to get married. Yet they pant and fret to get their children married. They know that they eat. But they struggle to earn and eat. They know that their children have their own minds, their own needs, their own likes and dislikes. Still they hold their plans with their likes and dislikes for their own children. This is because they want to own their children. An age-old tree cannot hold the plants of its own seeds within its trunk, bark and cork. The pith and marrow of what they design are but a corpse seen by the next generation. They try to fill their own span with all these details and tie it tight to the brim like a stuffed gunny-bag.

“You will meet the same fate if I allow you to remember your objective existence. So I contrive this practical method which serves as a sacrament to save you from your outside life of daily events. After so many generations, nobody knows whose children you are. I have

OUR CLASSROOM

batches of chaste young couples trained to serve as your parents. I have well understood the plan and purpose of human creation and contrived this system of education. Here lies your Ashram, into which the intellectuals, scientists and philosophers of the twentieth century could not make an entrance. For your information, you are now in the twenty-first century, according to the conventional minds who preserve dates. Your children are also admitted into the same school but you do not know who your children are. They do not know you as their parents. This is because the parents are agents appointed by nature to provide good, healthy and well-equipped bodies to the new recruits into the human kingdom. Your children are your colleagues in the class and this, you do not know. Before the training is complete, you will try to own your children and deflect them into your own curves and angles if I permit you to know them. Complete your career as good students, disperse, multiply and fill the same earth which was previously peopled by fools.

IT SEEMS TRUE

“I do not believe in the existence of God.”

“I never asked you to believe, if I remember well.”

“You cannot escape so easily. I know that you believe in God. I want to have a proof of the existence of your God, otherwise you have to accept that there is no God, and you have to believe what I believe.”

“Can you prove to me that you are hungry or thirsty? If you cannot prove, I don't permit you to eat or drink. Do you think the argument is sane? What you feel is true to you. What I feel is true to myself. Why are you bothered by what others feel or know? Try to understand what you want. You have your own center of thoughts, ideas, beliefs, aspirations and ideals. Am I correct?”

“Yes, I have my own point of view about all these things.”

“Can you track me back how you could come to your own conclusion? Is it by seeing the world around you, or is

IT SEEMS TRUE

it by your way of thinking about it? You have the same world around you as I have. By observing the same world, we came to different conclusions in the course of time. I call the center of my observations and conclusions my temple. I call it my temple in which my God lives,” said Shyam smilingly.

“I can call it myself. Why should I call it temple or God? When I am able to do what I want to do, I have nothing but myself in me. I can go wherever I want and I can speak whatever I want to. Then is there anything else other than myself?” questioned Ram.

“Did you take birth because you wanted? Did you breathe first because you wanted? Does your heart beat because you wanted? Do you feel hungry because you wanted? Now you feel that you want to do many things, and also feel that you can do all these things. Before you began to feel, there were many things worked out for you. For example, your birth, your first breath, your heart beat, etc. What you want to do is only like a ship sailing on the surface of the vast ocean of pre-existing possibilities. What you want to do is only a conditioning of all the possibilities

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that pre-exist. There is a common existence between your existence and the existence of the preceding conditions. That has the one will and one mind, which works through you and through me also,” explained Shyam.

“If your God’s mind works through everything, why should there be any inconsistency at all in this creation? You see, many people die early. Many suffer from sickness. Many suffer from poverty. Many are defrauded. Many immoral fellows live in happiness and plenty. Many people with legitimate wants are miserably deprived of them. Take my example. I wanted to marry a girl. I am sincerely in love with her. She is not inclined to accept. How do you account for this? Can your God help?” interrogated Ram.

“A few minutes ago, you declared that you could do everything you wanted to do. Now you want to marry a girl. Can’t you marry her? See the paradox of human intelligence devoid of common sense. According to you, God never proposed you should marry this girl. You proposed it and you question God about this. What is the use of showing your righteous indignation for the God who

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is not there? Go to an astrologer, a cousin of God, and ask him what is written in your horoscope about your love and her marriage.”

“By the by, I consulted an astrologer recently.”

“Without the permission of our God? Do you believe in astrology?”

“To some extent. It is a science which, when properly used, will give us the events of the future. A science has nothing to do with the existence of God.”

“Do you believe that your future is written in the stars? If so, by whom? As a believer of God, I do not believe that my future is decided by anyone except myself, let it be a man or a star. We, the God-men, are not so much dogged in our common sense as those who deny things they cannot see.”

“We will talk of God in some other occasion. First, let me explain to you my present position. The astrologer told me that I was going to marry that girl in the near future.”

“It all depends upon how you make an approach to her. Astrology never tells you that you will get married even

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though you sleep at home. The sacred science can give you only a clue to understand yourself and the other person. It gives you the probable timings of marriage, which, when married, leave you happy. You can transgress astrology and get yourself married in the most inopportune time. For example, during a journey or during some sickness. Then it is as good as not getting married, since the results are devastating. This is what astrology teaches. Bring your birth data and that of the girl you love. I will tell you how to solve the situation.” Saying so, Shyam calculated the astrological charts of Ram and Suseela. Then he explained, “Saturn in your horoscope is 90 degrees apart from Mars in her horoscope. This makes a malefic relationship of two aspects of the temperaments of both. It is not all the truth. It is only a part of the psychological desires of both. Saturn indicates cold intellect with all the depths of calculation. In a wrong angle, he indicates miscalculation, suspicion and too much thinking. Mars represents the emotional and impulsive nature of a person. In this case, your intellect is at logger heads with her emotion. This indicates that you have approached her when she was out of mind. Your

IT SEEMS TRUE

approach was too cold, calculating and reflecting. It is quite probable that you tormented her with many questions and conditions about the future.”

“Exactly so. I was too cautious about certain aspects and tried to extract certain promises from her. She tried to argue, but I hushed her with my power of argument. She went away and sent word through a common friend that I was too old in my mind though young in body. She said she could not appreciate my attitude towards life and she totally denied to accept the proposal. Now you tell me what to do?” asked Ram.

Shyam examined the horoscope once again and said, “Neptune in your horoscope is in the same degree as that of the Sun in her horoscope. This gives us a clue as to how to get her round. Unfortunately, Neptune involves some delusion and deception, to which you have to stoop in order to get her round. Sun in the horoscope of a female indicates the mentality of the male member who governs her life. Without informing her, make an approach to her parents. Do not reveal your name to the parents until the marriage is over. Thus you can make the marriage take place, but

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there will be a sting of unhappiness in her mind throughout her life. This is what Neptune indicates whenever he governs the affairs of affection.”

After ten days, Suseela made a smile to Ram. She informed him that her parents brought a marriage proposal to her which she was going to accept. She assured him that he need not entertain any hopes about her. This she expressed with a smile of vengeance, the expression of Mars, and went away. Ram put on a Saturnian face and approached Shyam. “Wait a bit, do not put the gloomy face of Saturn. You can assume a deceiving smile of Neptune with a dimple on your chin. Your deception is coming fruitful. Neptune is pleased to get her round to you, but remember you have to patch up the sting of unhappiness with the utmost skill of your Mercury. Mercury governs travel and the purchase of things that are fanciful. I fear you have to take her for a honeymoon trip which is rather expensive,” Shyam said and smiled.

After another week, Suseela appeared to Ram in a flash and said, “My marriage is fixed. I have been to my native place and the marriage party came and saw me. They

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are satisfied and everything is fixed. You need not have any hopes.”

Ram: “Have you seen the boy?”

Suseela replied, “I need not see him. Anyone on this earth will be better than you. When my parents and his parents are satisfied, I have nothing to say. I have that much of confidence in my parents.” Once again Mars frowned through her voice. Ram felt happy but he kept a blank face. He remembered how, a week ago, Suseela’s father came to his native place and saw Ram there. He had a nice talk and everything was decided. To Suseela’s parents, Ram was Gopi Krishna. He changed his name for the time being. So Gopi Krishna played the role of Neptune and everything for his play in Brindavan.

It was the time of the marriage. When Suseela was brought there, she saw Ram and was stunned. She cast looks like pins and needles but she could not do anything. She sat down and allowed Ram to tie the Mangalya around her neck and complete the ritual.

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After three years, Ram assured Shyam that he was really very happy at the end of three years. Everything was patched by him with great skill, but it took three years for Suseela to get reconciled. Finally, the reconciliation was in the form of a sturdy, beautiful child. Ram said, “It seems that there is a mind which is more intelligent than ourselves. Otherwise how can it arrange the planetary intelligences to go around the orbs, at the same time helping us whenever we know how to ask them? That intelligence which arranges the planets must be, most probably, what you call God.” Then Shyam said, “It is the same intelligence that made you bring forth your child. The story goes on through millennia but it is the same story, always novel. It is written by some unknown writer on the pages of space through the syntax of time in the alphabet of planetary bodies.”

DO SOMETHING USEFUL

“Sitting silently? That means you are not inclined to do anything.”

“I am repeating Rama namam, the name of the Lord, in my heart.”

“That means you like to idle time. Doing something useful to the society is doing something. Doing Rama namam is practically doing nothing.”

“To you it is true. Similarly, something else is true with me. Everyone has his own true way of doing something. Truth is impersonal, but it is understood only on a personal level, that too piecemeal. I do what I feel true. In that way you are no way better.”

“The pity is you cannot understand what I say. There is a big wall between us.”

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“Same thing about you from my own point of view. But I don’t entertain my point of view because I entertain the name of God in all,” said Shyam, smiling. There were two minutes of silence between Shyam and Raghavayya. Again, Shyam said, “You see, there were two minutes of silence and you could not control it. Still you say that time is to be spent usefully. Better to understand that time is our Master. Now that your wife is sick and you are at the bedside, it is more useful for you to look to her needs than to criticise the silence of others and the name of God.”

Raghavayya said, “Sometimes the statements of fools seem to prove valid. I wanted to go out to the city and bring medicine to my wife. The doctor gave this prescription yesterday and I could not find time to bring the medicine till today. I am about to start for the medicine into the city. I have to go 20 kilometers and bring the medicine. My wife’s fever is in no way better. Yet I am lost in discussing with you about time, silence, and the name of God. What I feel is that stupidity is contagious also, not only congenital.

DO SOMETHING USEFUL

See how I am conditioned by your mind till now. I am leaving for the medicine.”

“Yes, that is the more useful part of your work, which you are permitted to understand. Good luck. Get the medicine soon and do your duty,” said Shyam. Raghavayya came out into the street and approached the bus stop. He waited for the bus while he counted minutes. It was 18 minutes before he could find the bus and catch it. Yes, sometimes it is understood that time is the master. Raghavayya got down before the medical shop in the city and purchased the medicines according to the prescription. As he took the packet and came out, he found his colleague, Narayanarao, with whom he discussed the news of the day at length. Sometimes the discussion was heated since both of them belonged to the ideology of two different political parties. Each one criticised the other party for not discharging its legitimate duties. Each pointed out the questionable methods the other party is following. Each felt that his party was not given a free hand to serve the public. The discussion went on for an hour and a half, then

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Raghavayya suddenly recollected his wife's condition. He got up, took leave of Narayanarao and could catch the earliest possible return bus. His mind was running faster than the bus, but he had to wait until the bus reached the destination. No sooner the bus stopped at his corner, Raghavayya jumped out of the bus and went home. Shyam was applying a handkerchief soaked in cold water to the brow of Raghavayya's wife. He saw Raghavayya, made a big sigh and said, "The temperature is high. It is now 104.8 degrees." Raghavayya approached and saw his wife tossing restless in the bed. "Why are you so late?" questioned Shyam. "That fellow, Narayanarao, came in the way and wasted much time in discussion. I do not remember myself when I enter into a discussion of current political affairs. It is my weakness."

"You say my weakness is God's name. Now you attend to her properly and hurry up in administering the medicine," said Shyam.

DO SOMETHING USEFUL

Raghavayya wanted to administer the first medicine purchased in the medical shop. He discovered that he forgot the pack of medicines in the medical shop itself. What a pity. Politics is as dangerous as religion. The one criticises the other for not doing its duties properly.

“Quick, give the first dose,” hastened Shyam. With a pitiable look, Raghavayya submitted, “I only forgot the pack of medicines in the shop.” Shyam said, sarcastically, “You are too religious about politics. You got absorbed in it just as the student of Yoga gets himself absorbed in his breath.” Raghavayya grew furious and replied, “I admire your sparkling wit, but we have to do something useful to the patient and that too immediately.” Shyam said, “Take the next bus, run to the city and bring the medicine, that is the only possible way useful to her.” Raghavayya said, “How can I leave her at this stage? Suggest something desirable.” Then Shyam said, “At this juncture, two of us cannot do better than one. You are a bit excited. Hence I am better to act now. I will decide for you. Follow what I say. Take the earliest bus into the city, pick up the medicine

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and come back. I will attend to the patient and I hope I will be able to do the needful here before you come. I am not alone because Rama namam is with me.” Without a single word, Raghavayya escaped out into the street, took the bus, went to the city, and entered the medical shop. The young man at the sales counter smiled and readily handed over the pack of medicines. Raghavayya greeted him and said, “Thank you, it is much kind of you.” The young man smiled and said, “Be thankful to Lord Radhaswamy.” Raghavayya took the pack of medicines and returned home. He did not know or remember if he entered the bus, took a seat in it and got down from it.

He approached the house with mixed emotions. He was in doubt if the medicines would be of any use to the situation at all. While the thought came to his mind if he were to bring a Brahmin priest with a pot, two bamboos, etc. etc. He very much wished that Shyam came out of the house and explained the situation to him before he entered the house. He placed his right leg into the threshold meticulously like the elephant entering into a cave of lions.

DO SOMETHING USEFUL

“After ten minutes, she began gasping. The face was red and the eyes were sunken. She grew semi-conscious and was groaning. Repeatedly she looked at the door, evidently expecting your arrival. My mind indicated that things were going wrong. I closed my eyes and I began to chant the name of Rama.” As Shyam was narrating, Raghavayya cut the conversation and said, “And you say she is no more. Why do you stop me here? I will directly go to the bed and find out.” Shyam stopped and said, smilingly, “If you go there you will see your wife safe. Therefore, listen to me. Sit down. As I was chanting the name of Rama, I found someone entering into the house. It was Mr. Ramarao, the famous Ayurvedic doctor and naturopath of Hyderabad. He came to these parts and dropped here to see me. He went to my house and came here straight to see me. He saw the situation and said, ‘Do not worry.’ He went into the backyard, brought some leaves and crushed them. He gave two drops of the juice in ½ ounce of water to her. He soaked his handkerchief in

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warm water and placed it on her face. Now you can go and see the situation.”

Raghavayya went straight to the bed and saw his wife lying still in the bed. He stretched his hand to touch her but Ramarao was there at the bedside. He caught hold of Raghavayya’s hand and said, “She is sleeping. Do not disturb her. I am not concerned who you are to her. If I am not wrong, she is your wife. She is safe. Wait till she awakens. It is only to verify that the temperature comes to normal and then you can follow my instructions. I only expect that you do not open the packet of medicines you brought. Keep them for a better occasion, preferably to use for yourself. She needs no medicine and be sure of it until you verify, after she awakens.”

GO AHEAD!

Chandrasekhar is a young post-graduate who could secure a lecturer's job recently. A young, slim, beautiful chap having a wiry nervous constitution and a cautious temperament, he wanted to have a planned way of things in every field. One morning, he greeted me at my house, peeping through his gold-rimmed specs with a moderate, well-calculated smile. After settling down into conversation, he said, "I have a daughter who is two years old, and again my wife is in the family way. One daughter and one son are enough for us Indians. I want you to go through my horoscope and advise accordingly."

I accepted to examine his horoscope, before which I said, "Now that you are ahead of an event, there is no room for any advice. It is only after your wife's delivery we can discuss things." I examined the horoscope and asked him to postpone discussion until after her delivery. "So, you suspect that the next one is also a daughter," said

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Chandrasekhar. After eight months, he came to me again with the news of the birth of another daughter. “Do you advise me to venture to have one more issue?” he asked, handing over a neat copy of the horoscope. “Do you expect me to assure you about the birth of a male child next?” I asked.

“Exactly so. Examine my horoscope and tell me if the next child happens to be a boy.”

“If my reading is that it would be a boy you propose to go ahead. If it is a girl, you will consider.”

“Yes, I have to consider a lot. I do not like to go on producing a number of children. It is foolish. You know our country’s condition.”

“You want to put a stop now, in that case? If you are serious about your problem, I will go into your planets and scan for an answer.”

Chandrasekhar pursued, “If the next child is found to be a girl, I do not want it.”

GO AHEAD!

“If you believe in astrology, it is possible to locate all your would-be children at a time. It is not so chronological as to beget. If the fourth child or the fifth happens to be a male, what is your programme? Sometimes decisions are very difficult. Remember that the great International poet philosopher of India is the 19th child of his father. If you are given such a chance by the planets, do you want to accept or lose?”

Chandrasekhar answered with a hesitating intellect. “I know that you argue in your own peculiar way. You mean to say that sometimes it is a great loss to the nation if family-planning is observed. At the same time, I do not want to galvanise all my ‘dream children’ into flesh on this land.”

“If that were to be so, you can safely put a stop.”

“You mean to say that my horoscope shows no male children?”

“Truth presents that much through the limited window of my understanding.”

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Then Chandrasekhar took a lead and said, “Five eminent astrologers of the place assure me of a male child. Two of them confirm that the next one happens to be a son. Now what do you advise?”

“If you bank upon half of that much assurance, go ahead. But my reading tallies not with what you have gathered.”

One year eight months passed. Chandrasekhar came to me with a smile and said, “I experimented a third time and again it is a girl. Please go through my horoscope once again and advise.”

“You mean advise for the next hit?”

“Don’t be silly. From the time of our student life you have grown in wisdom, but remained silly as you were when you enjoyed student life. Go through my horoscope a bit more carefully.”

“More careful scrutiny may sometimes bring a boy into light, you believe? In that case, scrutiny on medical grounds is better than astrology. Then you may have

GO AHEAD!

transplantation for a male child. As far as I understand, there is no scope for male children in your horoscope.”

With a flare-up, Chandrasekhar spoke, “Mr. Scorpio, the experienced professor of astrology, says that hundred percent he is sure of me having a male child next time. Do you advise me to try?”

I said “no.” Another one year six months passed. Chandrasekhar said his wife was again in the family way. It so happened that I left Guntur and shifted my headquarters to Visakhapatnam. Somehow, the issue did not rise in my mind for a long time. Ten years passed. There was an examiners’ meeting in the university. I could see many of my old friends and colleagues in the Registrar’s office. When I was busy with the trial paper valuation, there was a tap on my shoulder and I saw someone who resembled my old friend Chandrasekhar when I lifted my head. He was much stouter than Chandrasekhar, more rough in complexion, but the face resembled the same. I could recognise my friend through time. It was 5 PM when the meeting ended. It involved a

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lot of strain and we were like beaten donkeys. I was inclined to go home, have a wash and a nice relaxation. Stealthily enough, Chandrasekhar followed me to my house. He sat before me at the desk and was busy taking out folders of old papers from his pocket. Evidently he was hankering for his horoscope. Finally he succeeded in unfolding the paper which packed his planets and put it on the table. He said, “I am thoroughly disappointed with astrologers and astrology. Every time the idiot of an astrologer assures me of a son and every time I beget a female child. It has become a game.”

“Till now, how many daughters in all?” I asked.

“As many as nine. Long ago you advised me to put an end. Do you advise the same even now?”

“No. Not at all. It is immaterial if you observe family planning or not after having nine children. The term ‘idiot’ which you used applies to you, not to the astrologers. Now, after plodding for such a long time with a profuse yield, I advise you to continue in the same directions until the ground is clear.”

YOGA PRACTICE

“I began practising Yoga since one year. People say that Yoga brings peace to the mind. My experience is anything but that. Of late, my subtler vehicles are becoming finer and finer and the result is that I am not able to bear any disturbance around me. As the mind is getting purified, my sense of perfection is growing more and more and I find it quite difficult to put up with this world of external affairs, which is always defective. Somehow, I find myself out of tune with the people around me who always live below the level of my mental purity,” Balakrishna remarked one evening. He is one among the many young people who began practising Yoga within the four walls of his shrine room. I expressed my doubt, “Those who know remark that Yoga adds to our tranquillity by removing the craze and restlessness of the

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surface mind. What I hear from you is to the contrary. I doubt your practice is in the right lines.”

Balakrishna said: “My practice is as per the book and I studied the Yoga textbook and tried to understand long since. No doubt, my mind has become pure and it can add to the tranquility I expect. But the pity is that the brightest light casts the darkest shadow. The trouble is with the people around me. My wife is a fool who cannot understand what I want.” I interpreted, “A real student of Yoga does not want anything. Wants are minimised during the Yoga practice. In fact, it is one of the requisites of the first step of the Raja Yoga path.”

Balakrishna tried to force me in his direction, “Listen to me patiently. Do not get disturbed. Disturbance is a sure sign of upsurging emotions. I can have patience with those who are disturbed. The same trouble with my wife and the little child. If you prove no better, I cannot make you understand what Yoga is. All along I try to put up with everyone, but everyone carries a bundle of problems in his

YOGA PRACTICE

mind. The result is a constant headache to me. Whenever someone comes to me, talks and goes, I get headaches and it takes a long time for me to get normal. This is all due to the overpurified state of my nerves. The more they are purified, the more they are high-strung. It is for this reason, I think, that the great Yogis and Sanyasins turn their back to the common herd and retire into forests and caves.”

I interpreted, “It may be true with the Sanyasins but it is not true with the Yogis. The moment Gautama Buddha came to the light of himself, he turned back and faced millions of people among the suffering humanity to find his own tranquil reflection in them. Neither Rama, nor Krishna, nor Jesus turned their pious backs to the public.”

With a sigh of despair, Balakrishna left me in the park and went home. After a few days, I had sudden knocks at my door late in the night. I found Balakrishna, a worse figure, with a worse countenance. His face was like that of a bitten dog. “Can I sleep in your room this night? I find

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peace nowhere. Everyone is guilty of disturbing me with his own province.”

“Are you still practising Yoga?” I asked.

“Yes, of course. I am practising meditation of a higher degree. All day long people prove contagious of their impure vibrations and I suffer. I suffer from severe headache, body pains and acidity. The doctor says that my acidity is due to my anxiety.”

“How are your wife and child?” I asked.

“Don’t tell me. I am fed up. I feel like not going home at all. I have arranged everything for them and I direct my salaries home. You must know that I never shirk from my duties towards my wife and child.”

I asked, “Is it for the money and other comforts that your wife married you? It is for the presence of someone near and dear that a living being craves. Love is the expression of God, and companionship is the child’s play

YOGA PRACTICE

of the Lord. For heaven's sake, stop your so-called Yoga practice and be mundane rather than cynical.

“Yoga practice presupposes tolerance and peace demands goodness. Happiness visits those who give happiness to others and not those who demand happiness from others. The ethics of Yoga are different from what you understand. Yoga is neither attainment, nor achievement, but it is an awareness of your own experience. It leads you to tranquillity, and you are expected to distribute it in the form of peace to others. Tranquillity likes good conductors of tranquillity. If you want to gather peace and condense it, the voltage will be too high to be contained by your frail vehicle. Tension leads to a burning of the filaments which leaves the vehicle permanently damaged and you have to live in the world as a discharged battery.”

“I find a grain of truth in what you say, but my standards of perfection do not tolerate others behaving as they please with me,” said Balakrishna with a sigh.

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“Don’t you understand that you are behaving as you like with others while they are kind enough to put up with your spiritual vagaries?” I said.

“True! True! In fact, I repeatedly thought of giving up the Yoga practice. But what of the previous practice throughout the year? Is it not a waste? ” he questioned.

I said, “It will never go to waste. It is there in you like the money in the safe of a dirty miser. Open the chest and make an organised distribution of what you have. They will be yours. You can continue to practise Yoga but remember that happiness and joy can be purchased only by giving joy, and not by trying to possess joy.”

I ONLY WANTED TO BE A GURU

“Namaste Swamiji! Namaste!” Mr. Ganesh, the chief industrialist of the city, confronted the new Swamiji with a plump garland of flowers in his hand. He is glittering in his lower garment of golden yellow silk, which he wore as a dhoti in orthodox fashion. The massive upper part of his body was fully naked but for his sacred thread, hanging across the shoulders. With great devotion, Ganesh unburdened his hands by throwing the garland around the neck of Swamiji. Swamiji’s hump was lowered a little with all the weight of the garland. Then Ganesh threw all the weight of his body upon the holy feet of Swamiji and said, “Swamiji, I am now safe. I have thrown all my burdens upon your holy feet. Now the welfare of our family is the concern of our Swamiji. I can sit at your holy feet and

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spend all my time in respite, enjoying the transcendental peace!”

Mahesh, the director of a big bank, followed the footsteps of Ganesh. Mahesh is one of the VIPs of the city. He fell prostrate upon the feet of the Swamiji, lifted himself up and filled the hands of Swamiji with apples and plantains. The poor Swamiji walked carrying the garland and the fruits.

Suresh, the manager of the five-star hotel, touched the holy toes of Swamiji, scratched off the holy dust which he sprinkled upon his head. However, he preserved some dust in a paper for himself and the heads of his wife and children. Then he stood up like a folded spring chair and fixed the cone-shaped packet of hotel sweets into the elbow of Swamiji. Then he said, “Swamiji, my son is at Delhi and you have to save him now from the present muddle in which he is struggling.” The Swamiji carried the cone of sweets also with a humble smile.

I ONLY WANTED TO BE A GURU

Sudhesh, the lion banker of the city, anchored himself at the holy soles of Swamiji. “Save our souls, Holy Swamiji. Tomorrow my brother has to face an enquiry committee and offer his explanation. By your grace, lift him up from the present crisis just as the great boar lifted up the earth.” Saying so, he presented a pair of red robes to Swamiji, spreading them over the hump of Swamiji, above the massive garland. Like the poor pussycat, the Swamiji carried them in poise with his meek smile.

In the meanwhile, all of them made the Swamiji arrive at the house of Paresh, the wholesale businessman of heavy tools. There was a big commotion of emotion in the name of devotion. Chairs rocked, tables walked and plates talked in jingle. People flacked and the doorways were blocked. The Swamiji was shocked and said to himself in his mind, “I only wanted to be a Guru. I did not know the seriousness of it.” A big cushioned chair was pushed from the back of Swamiji. The Swamiji had to tumble into the chair, smooth and safe. However, he could maintain the poise of all the

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cargo he carried. The Swamiji sat while all others stood. They could tower above him and cover him from all sides. Swamiji had no escape. The pious intrigue of the devotees was successful in suffocating the Swamiji. He wanted to speak by way of blessing. No one was ready to pay attention to what he wanted to say. “I am sorry. I have to answer a small call of nature,” whispered the Swamiji. Everyone was busy with his devotion. So the Swamiji had to bloat. At last, he made a desperate attempt to get up from the chair and stand. The cargo which he carried slipped down and scattered in all directions. Every one of the devotees could catch a piece of it without allowing it to fall on the ground.

As the Swamiji attempted to get up, he found that his two legs were pulled away from the ground. The devotees caught hold of the Swamiji’s lotus feet and lifted them up above the ground so high. They only wanted to catch the pair of feet in a big, round brass plate, so the pair of feet stood floating in the water of the plate and they could never

touch the ground again. All the hefty men folk and women folk took the water from the feet and sprinkled it over their heads and their little ones too! Swamiji waited if all the devotees could complete the ritual. It was a never-ending line. The doorways and sideways delivered new candidates ushering their presence before the feet in the plate. Lo! There was a miracle. The water in the plate began to increase as the devotees increased in number. All felt pride on behalf of the Swamiji.

There is a slow and continuous increase of voices in a discussion near the plate. Everyone wanted to carry the water in the plate to his house and office. There was a conflict and a fight. Devotees got heated up. Many hands caught hold of the Swamiji's feet while many others attacked the Swamiji's holy body. They lifted him corporally from the chair along with the plate of water under his feet intact. They began to carry the physical presence of the Swamiji in the plate. Swamiji suddenly stood up but he had to stand in the plate. His feet were

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never allowed to touch the ground. He had to catch hold of two or three heads to keep up his poise. He was afraid for his life.

Suddenly, the Swamiji jumped out with a jerk and found himself sitting on his bed in his bedroom. It was all but a dream. Gradually he could compose himself and talked to himself, “I only wanted to be a Guru. I now realise how dangerous it is. I am lucky to see that my experiment is finished in a dream.”

THE LANGUAGE OF PLANETS

“Guruji, I came to receive your blessings. Here is the horoscope of my son and the bride selected for him. They are here folded with turmeric and smeared with sandalwood paste. Be pleased to touch them and press them together with your blessings.” Appayya placed the two horoscopes on the altar and stood with folded hands, himself bent like a crane. “Have you seen the bride and allowed the boy to see her and talk to her before you brought the two horoscopes together?” asked Guruji.

“I have seen the girl, everything is favourable. By elders’ consent everything has been decided.”

“Everything is favourable! It sounds like money. Nowadays the rupee coin sounds bad since it has neither gold nor silver in it. You should be able to listen to the

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jingle of the gold of love between the couple before you decide. I hope you have done this.”

“Of course, of course. In our family we, the elders, decide things. The compatibility is decided by the planets in the horoscopes.”

“Of course! The planets are made to decide by the elders in terms of the tiger head on the hundred rupees note. But it is wise to find out if the boy likes the girl and the girl likes the boy. It is the way to bless them in its true sense. Without it, these blessings become a phrase. With all my tapas and devotion, how can I compel the planets to work favourably by pressing the two horoscopes together?”

However, the Guruji was forced to press the horoscopes together. The formality was completed and the marriage was performed. Three years passed.

* * * *

“Guruji, something is wrong with our family. Whatever I do proves a failure. Last night, when I was out

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of station, I received an urgent message to return home immediately. I found my son sitting alone in the house, arranging a rope from the top of the house to hang himself. With great difficulty I could stop him, but he is still persistent. He says he has no interest in life. I bow down to your feet so that you may burn my Karma to ashes.”

“Your Karma is not the problem. Your son’s Karma, which made him take his birth as your son, is the crux of the problem. First of all, be sure that your son is not having any danger of hanging himself. He is shrewd enough to advertise about his hanging proposal and make you know of it from a distance. Hence there is no danger of his getting hanged. It is only a threat. But what about the causes that led him to do it? I fear you got him married to a girl who did not like him. I understand that she wanted to marry another boy but Saturn in her horoscope came down to earth in your form and confused the whole issue. Bring your boy to me and I will find out the remedy.”

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“Guruji, here is my boy, waiting outside. He says that his wife is not willing to obey him. Nor was she obedient to us, the elders, all these days.”

“I do not like you to speak on behalf of the boy. Call him inside, I will talk to him.”

The boy was brought inside. Guruji asked what the matter was. The boy narrated. “On the first night of our meeting, I found my wife silent for a long time. Then she began weeping. After repeated questioning, she said she wanted to marry her uncle’s son, but the elders interfered. Since then she began to non-cooperate in everything by way of revenge. The parents say that she was good until she was married. Now I find that I failed in my life. I have no interest to live.”

The Guruji said, “Now, my dear Appayya, what will be the solution to the problem? When the glass tumbler is already broken, what will be the way to keep it safe from being broken?”

THE LANGUAGE OF PLANETS

With clasped hands rubbing each other, Appayya said, “If you perform Navagraha puja, I am sure that you can set everything right. I have the greatest confidence in you and your powers. The planets in her horoscope will be changed by your power. I am ready to pay as much money as required to propitiate the planets.”

“Well, it will not be that much amount which you received from the bride’s father. My poor Appayya! I wish you to know that planets cannot be bribed. They are your well-wishers who read the message of the future in advance. How can they help if you do not care to listen to them? You folded the horoscopes and pasted them with sandal wood and turmeric. So the planets could not speak to you that day. When I wanted to speak for the planets, you tried to silence me by flattering me. Now the planets stand as cocks, crying out the doom of an ill-arranged future. The cocks began to fight. The only solution is to keep the cocks away from each other. It is a solution for ever and a decree of the planets. If you are kind enough, let

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the couple get themselves divorced and get married again according to the will of the planets, which is expressed through the liking of the couple.”

“It is too cruel. Is there no other solution which the Guruji can suggest?”

“Yes, there is. Give a red rope to each and ask the couple to live as Sanyasins in two different hermitages of two Swamijis. See if you allow them to live as children of God, getting themselves married according to their will, or live as children of Swamijis. It is left to your good sense.”

GIVE THE CREATOR A FREE HAND

Men and women bathed and clad in pious robes stood in devotion. They stood in two different rows to have darshan of the holy Swamiji. At the end of the male row, there stood a lean, tall figure, bent forward in awe and veneration with folded hands. As the row of devotees increased and decreased in number, the tall figure always kept his position only as the last man. The Swamiji looked at him from a distance and verified many times to find out that he stood as the last man. Is he a reincarnation of Abu Ben Adam? For five days, the holy Swamiji observed him as the last man in the row, but surprisingly, the Swamiji was missing him by the end of the daily sessions of darshan. He was at a loss to understand what the tall man meant. Is it merely a darshan he wanted, after which he slipped away? Is he really a man who did not want

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anything? Then the Swamiji thought that his holiness was about to touch some dushkarma by ignoring him. A real Swamiji is one who has no bondages of Karma. Now it is his duty to see that the sticky attraction towards the tall fellow is to be distilled and purified into compassion and love. However, there was something sticky about the pious attitude of the tall man.

From a distance, the Swamiji could attract the glance of the tall man. Immediately he gripped his sight with a smile and beckoned at him gently with his finger. The tall man, Sankararao, tried to escape from the compassionate grip of the Swamiji, with movements of restlessness tainted with humility. It was high time and the Swamiji could prevail upon him. With great reluctance mingled with the piety of resignation, Sankararao advanced to the holy feet of Swamiji. He fell prostrate without touching the two pious feet and stood up trembling and sweating in veneration.

GIVE THE CREATOR A FREE HAND

“My son, what is the matter? I saw you coming daily. You stand at the end of the row all these days and you disappear in the end. Why can't you come to me and have your riddles cleared?” The Swamiji spoke with a healthy encouraging smile replete with divine glow.

Sankararao: "Swami, who am I to stand before you? I am not even a speck in this creation of the four-faced Brahma. I stand as the last one."

Swamiji: “Of course, it is good to believe so. At the same time, it is not good to have an estimate of yourself. It is rather the duty of the Creator to have an estimate of yourself or others."

Sankararao: "If I believe that I am useful for anyone in this world, it amounts to ego."

Swamiji: "If you believe that you are useless, it amounts to an ego of worse type. Tell me if the form of this Swamiji can do something for you."

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Sankararao: "Swami, I want to serve the Lord by studying our scriptures and propagating them through my own humble writings. I have written a few books about the messages of the Vedas. Of course, these books are too little and worthless. I doubt if I am right in presenting these copies at the holy feet of the Swamiji."

Swamiji: "In your humility, you are calling the import of the Vedas worthless. The moment you got yourself attached to the Vedas, you became pure. To carry the idea of worthlessness of your work is to attach your worthlessness to the scriptures. Lose your worthlessness before the altar of the Vedas and never carry it into the books right through."

Sankararao: "First of all, tell me, am I fit to do such things? Do I have the purity to attempt to write something about the Vedas?"

Swamiji: "Everything shapes from God to man. Now in your humility, you are prepared to doubt the discretion of God Himself. Without His will, how could you get at the

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idea of making this attempt? Is it sinful for man to eclipse God's work, whether the motive is pious or impious. Humility against the work of God is ego itself, and to that effect it is evil. Why do you remember yourself more strongly than you remember God? When God expects that you should forget about yourself, you stand before Him adamantly. Really such people of humility embarrass the Creator Himself. In fact, the Creator will be in doubt whether he should feel the utmost humility at having created such ones. A glance through the pages of your book convinced my mind that it is a worthy attempt. You know everything about the Vedas. You have a good analytical and synthetic outlook of the scriptures. It means that Saraswathi struggles to express Herself out through you. Your humility wrestles with Her and tries to shunt Her back, and that too is against the will of the Lord. Really, such people are parts of the 8th wonder of the world.

“If you want to serve God, be true to Him and let Him express His plan through you. Do not be afraid of getting

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prominent before the public. Always the public wants something good. They await instructions from God people and they have an instinct to obey the instructions, when transmitted timely. If you doubt the public, you doubt the Creator Himself. If you doubt yourself, you are doubting the very plan of God. When criminals are not ashamed of thinking that they are correct, why should good people shirk to think that their work is good? Fame and prominence are hindrances to those who protect their ego. To you, the follower of God's word, fame and prominence will serve the propagation of God's work and not yours. Leave your ego and let God work with His plan through you. Give a free hand to the poor Creator!"

SIDDAPPA

“He is a Sanyasin and has no one. He does not even need ochre-coloured robes and wears only a loincloth. Now and then he appears in the woods near our village. He is endowed with wonderful powers. Yet he uses them only to cure the sick and not for advertising himself,” said Murali Krishna.

But Subba Rao was skeptical about it.

“Are you sure about these powers of that Sanyasin? Maybe he does not possess them as you think. Such people do not talk of what they do not know but keep silent. And people like you take them for Yogis and are deceived.” But Murali Krishna would not agree. He said, “It’s not in my nature to contemplate things outside my purview. I believe in him since I am content with that which is revealed to me. The Sanyasin has cured many chronic diseases using some

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herbs, and you see, I am not a fool to be deceived by appearances.

“I am speaking out of my own experience. I had some throat trouble until four years ago. I went to many doctors and tried many medicines. I even had a tissue from my throat examined but all that was of no avail. I refused to undergo an operation and took leave of them. One morning, I encountered the Sanyasin in the woods nearby. He gave me a smile and asking me to open my mouth, put some herbal powder in it. Believe it or not, from that day onwards, never did the pain trouble me.

“You may consider it a cock-and-bull story but it is very true and real to me. Anyway, this argument between us is useless, since you do not know him but I do. And I will not listen anymore to your opinion,” concluded Murali Krishna.

But Subba Rao would not cut the subject. After thinking for a while, he spoke thus, “So you think that your Sanyasin can read the other man completely. Did it occur

to you that it may be due to a power called ‘Karna Pisachi’? And it is nothing but what psychology terms as thought-reading.”

“Can your so-called psychologist do thought-reading?” questioned Murali Krishna.

“Oh! No. They can only state it in theory. Certainly they can’t do it. Now this man, does he cure anyone? What do you think he is gaining by it?” asked Subba Rao.

His insistence irritated Murali Krishna. “All right, all right. Go and examine what the Sanyasin is gaining, if you can. Don’t leave him if you think it profitable. I believe in him since I am benefitted by his cure. To try to probe into his motives and medicines is belittling myself,” said Murali and left the place.

* * * *

One day, Subba Rao met the Sanyasin in the forest and immediately he began to hurl questions at him.

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“Oh, I have been waiting for you. Do you know what I am suffering from? Can you cure it? If you can do so, it will be challenging the doctors who would not do it; at the same time, it will bring you fame and recognition.”

But before Subba Rao could complete his speech, the Sanyasin said, “Isn’t your name Subba Rao? Can you open your mouth for this medicine before I walk away?” And saying so, he went forward without waiting for Subba Rao. Subba Rao was left in a dilemma. Is he to trust that Sanyasin and open his mouth or not? Yet he managed to overcome and opened his mouth. The Sanyasin put a little powder in his mouth and told him to fall at his feet. “Why?” questioned Subba Rao. “For your own sake,” said the Sanyasin and started walking away rapidly.

Subba Rao again was in a dilemma. “How to fall at the feet of this man? I never saluted even greater souls in my life. How can I do that now?” But some hope flickered in his mind. “Maybe this will really rid me of all the diseases I have.” Thinking thus, he fell flat at the feet of the

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Sanyasin, since nobody was there to watch this display of humility. But the Sanyasin walked over his outstretched hands while Subba Rao was still prostrate, which enraged him.

In less than a fortnight, Subba Rao felt better and completely healthy. It surprised him. “Who needs these doctors if the Sanyasin can cure any disease with a pinch of powder herbs? And how much money would be collected if only the Sanyasin could start collecting fees?” Subba Rao’s wicked mind started thinking hard.

“This fellow has no common sense. But if I can make use of him, I will earn both money and fame,” thought Subba Rao.

His village was full of politics and he contributed to increasing the rifts between casts and religions. Before Subba Rao was born, there were castes, not casteism, religions, but not fanatics. But when he grew up, he created class and caste differences. Now he planned to use the Sanyasin as a tool in his evil plans.

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But Murali Krishna did not agree. He opposed Subba Rao vehemently. Yet, Subba Rao succeeded in bringing the Sanyasin now and then to the village premises to cure various diseases. Subba Rao started taking only those people who belonged to his class, caste and group to be cured by the Sanyasin. As usual, they were cured by him. Later, Subba Rao started collecting 50 rupees per head. One day, he took a five rupee note to the Sanyasin and offered it to him, saying that he could buy some bidis with it.

The Sanyasin asked for a matchbox, rolled the five rupee note, lighted it and smiled at Subba Rao. From then onwards, Subba Rao offered him nothing.

Six months passed. People from neighboring villages also started coming to the Siddha. One day, a man suddenly came from a group and stabbed Siddha. He fell down with a smile on his face and died. All the people there started beating the killer.

SIDDAPPA

Later they found out that Subba Rao himself had arranged the killing, since the Siddha was curing people outside his group and even his opponents, which he could not bear.

Villagers erected a statue of the Siddha in the woods. Wood is constantly fed into the fire made in front of the Siddha's statue. Passers-by take a pinch of the ashes, prostrate before the statue and go away with tears in their eyes. They believe that it cures all kinds of ailments. Women bring their children to the statue, name them Siddappa and go back.

THE OFFERING

“My salutations to you, Master.”

“God bless you, child. Come on, be seated. Have you come from a far-off place?”

“Yes, Master. But how can I consider the distance when I have something in my mind?”

“Wisely said, though you are young. What do you want from me?”

“Master, you have the reputation of being a sage who can read the past, the present and the future, and also as one who is well-read in the intricacies of the Self—the Atman.”

“Very good. I now understand your interest in the Self and also your regard for me.”

“But Master, I did not come just to see you, but to be your disciple, to learn about the Atman.”

THE OFFERING

“Very well then. But before you become my disciple, will you do something for me?”

“Yes, Master.”

“It is a very small task. Go around this place and bring me something which you think is worthless. Then I shall start teaching you.”

“All right, Master. I will come back at once.”

The disciple felt very happy because his Master asked him to bring a very simple thing. He came across a cow, which he thought worthless, and he wanted to take it to his Master. Then he heard a voice which greeted him. It surprised him.

The cow said, “Do you really think that I am a worthless being? But I give you milk which is very valuable. You humans depend on me for your coffee, curd, ghee, butter and cheese. How then, can you consider me worthless? I don’t like your idea.”

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The disciple realised the truth in it. How can a cow be worthless when man is benefitting from her in so many ways? He let the cow go and again looked for what his Master asked. He then thought of dried grass and decided to take it to his Master. Then he heard the grass speak.

It said, “I am not happy with what you think of me. You let the cow off because it gives you good food. But do you know what the cow’s food is? It lives on me. How ignorant you are!”

The disciple considered this also and knew his mistake. He recognised the value even grass has. He continued his search for the worthless thing his Master had asked for and saw a heap of dung. He wished to take it. Then the heap of dung said to him:

“You are wrong, son, in considering me worthless. I am used to strengthen the fields, which give you crop and grass. Don’t you know that the sacred ash you smear on your forehead is made out of me?”

THE OFFERING

The disciple thought better of it also and thought human waste was even less valuable than animal waste. But even human waste protested against this and said that it was good, rich food before man consumed it. It said that it came to its present state through association with man. It challenged him to see who was worthless—itsself or the disciple.

Then the disciple understood that nothing is less worthy than man himself. He also realised why his Master gave him this task and went back to offer himself to his Master.

A MIRACLE

(Translated by Dhara Radha Krishna Murthy)

The evening sun spread a crimson curtain down the dome of space. Beside the lake, under the big banyan tree, a Kapalika was standing. His name was Pasupathinath. He was performing the ritual of invoking Kubera, the Lord of treasure elementals. He placed oil-fried cakes and cooked food which was a mixture of rice and green gram. Like a lightning, Kubera descended from the green foliage of the banyan tree. He was glittering with a crown and jewels of gold. He stood before the Kapalika and said: "Pasupathi! I warned you many a time not to spend your magical powers in conferring gifts upon undeserving creatures. With your power you changed your pet dog into a human being. Without consulting me, you have bestowed powers on him. You have tampered with the course of natural evolution. Remember that intelligence without experience is always dangerous. I know the nature of beings very well. Those that are skilful do not have the required experience. Many

A MIRACLE

of them with experience have not grown good enough. Many times, the intelligent ones are not dependable and those that are dependable are not intelligent.”

Pasupathi: “My Lord! Do you conclude that the good souls should not live? Then where is the place for compassion?”

Kubera: “Man cannot attain mastery over his own nature by gaining mastery over powers. He should try to understand the laws of nature and follow accordingly. Only the omniscient consciousness of creation knows the secrets of the behaviour of localised nature. By transforming the dog into a man through your magic, you have changed the physical equipment without the required development of the objective consciousness which can only be done through evolution. You forget that it took as many as thousands of years for you to evolve to the present state from that of a dog. The wise know that nothing should be hastened in Nature's workings.”

Pasupathi: “Excuse me, my Master! I explain to you how things happened. When I was absorbed in meditation,

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my dog was watching my hermitage. A wolf chased him and I was disturbed. To prevent the future danger, I transformed my dog into a tiger. Then on some other occasion, a wild tiger attacked mine. Then I promoted my fellow into a lion. Then he was accosted by a wild lion and I transformed him into a human fellow being. I developed sympathy for him in course of time. I blessed him with the power to control all other beings in the surroundings. Now my beloved disciple protects the calm of my surroundings from any intrusion. Thanks to him, my penance goes on undisturbed nowadays. Do you think, my Master, that I have done something undesirable?”

Kubera: “Had you consulted me it would have been wiser. Your compassion for him is motivated by your convenience. A good fencing could have solved the problem, then yourself and your dog would have lived in safety. I say you have spent much. Human nature unfolds greed along with intelligence. Man is the only creature whose ambitions know no bounds. I shudder to think what

A MIRACLE

is in store for you from the strange creature, the dog made man! Beware of him! I too will keep an eye over him.”

* * * *

Pasupathi's disciple, the dog made man, began to attract many people from the villages nearby. He began to exhibit his powers. He made scorpions and serpents dance up and down his body. He dragged tigers and lions by the ears and tail. He cured people from stings, bites and various complaints. His fame spread far and wide. Followers gathered round him and became his disciples. They made a spacious cottage for him near the banyan tree with all the conveniences. There was one village chief among his admirers. He planned to offer his daughter in marriage to the dog made man, by which he wanted the whole village under his political spell. He named the would-be son in law, Sundareswar.

One day he said: “Look Sundareswar! Your Guru made you a man for his own selfish ends. To serve him better he promoted you from dog to man. See, he does not even care to name you. Even the few powers he delegated

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to you are only to serve his own ends. It is plain that you are not safe in his hands. Be on guard and make hay while the sun shines. Remember that there is every possibility for him to make you a dog once again after his purpose is served. Worse still, he may kill you if you just try to save yourself. You are young and I know human nature better.”

Sundareswar began to think of it. Gradually it appeared true. He was, since then, not to be seen in public.

Pasupathi came to the stage of arranging everything for himself and the daily rituals, since his disciple, the dog made man, was not to be seen. That day he invoked Kubera by making the regular offering. In a flash, Kubera came down the banyan tree.

Kubera: “Take care. A plot is being hatched against your very life. In spite of the powers I conferred upon you, you remained a fool. Heed my timely advice and transform your disciple once again into a dog. I wish you stop many unpleasant surprises that are to follow.”

Pasupathi: “How can I destroy a plant which I planted with my own hands, even if it bears bitter fruit?”

A MIRACLE

Kubera: “Then await the results. You can seek my help at any time before it is too late.”

Sundareswar’s marriage was celebrated in much splendour and pomp. He had neither the guts nor the goodness to inform and invite Pasupathi, his Guru.

It was the first night and the couple met. Sundareswar found his wife standing at the corner of the door, all in tears. When coaxed she spoke: “I came to know that you are a dog transformed into a man by your Guru, a great magician. My uncle's son, who loved me and desired to marry me, revealed the story to me. My father has sponsored this marriage, devoid of my heart, only to realise his political ambitions through you. Now that I am your wife, I should rise to the occasion and be faithful to you. The very thought that your Guru may transform you again into a dog or a cat makes it impossible for me to think. I say you are not safe as long as your Guru is safe.”

Sundareswar: “Yes, I too came to this conclusion. I will make my way and your life happy once for all.”

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He stood up with a dagger drawn.

* * * *

A small, black cloud roared in thunder over the banyan tree. A lightning flashed and a thunderbolt crashed down in great violence from the blue. Pasupathi woke up, startled from a sound sleep. He saw a dog licking his foot, wagging its tail. The pitiful moan was something familiar to him. He petted the poor dog with his hand tenderly.

Kubera appeared from the green foliage of the banyan tree and said: "Do you now understand the law of nature, my boy?"