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SRI SATYANARAYANA STORY

CHAPTER 1

Once, Shownak and eighty eight thousand other rishis assembled at the forest of Naimisharanya and asked Maharishi Soot, the narrator of the Puranas, "Oh Maharishi, please tell us how mankind can attain salvation:" Maharishi Soot answered: "Once Narada Muni asked Lord Vishnu, the consort of Lakshmi, the same question. I will tell you what Lord Vishnu told Narada, so listen carefully."

Once, Narada during one of his sojourns to the various worlds, came to the earth. There he saw the people suffering as a result of their past deeds. To alleviate their sufferings and bring them salvation Narada travelled to Vishnu Lokha. There he found Lord Vishnu adorned with conch, chakra, gadha and lotus in his four hands and a garland around his neck. Narada spoke humbly: "Oh Supreme Lord, the savior of the destitute and the troubled, I surrender at thy feet." Lord Vishnu asked, "Why have you come here? Tell me what you want and I would fulfill your wishes." To which Narada replied, "Oh Bhagawan, people on earth are suffering in many ways as a result of their own past sinful deeds. Please bestow thy grace and reveal to me as to how they can be helped." Lord Vishnu replied, "Mankind can rid itself of all its sorrows by performing a puja called Satyanarayana puja. This puja, when performed according to religious rites will bring happiness, peace

of mind and wealth in this life and salvation beyond." On hearing this Narada was filled with joy and addressed Lord Vishnu thus: "Oh Lord, in Your infinite grace, please tell me the details of the puja that You have just mentioned, how and when to perform it and who has performed it before."

Lord Vishnu answered: "This puja can be performed any month on a full moon day. One must gather his friends and relatives, perform the puja with devotion and offer fruits, ghee, milk, curd, butter, wheat flour, sugar and honey to God. After the puja is finished, he must read the Satyanarayana katha and distribute prasad to everybody. If the puja is thus performed, it will bring fulfillment of one's wishes. Particularly, in the Kaliyuga, this puja can bring contentment."

CHAPTER 2

Maharishi Soot continued addressing the assembled rishis: "Oh Rishis, I will now tell you who all have observed the Satyanarayana Vratha in the past. Once, there lived a very poor brahmin in the beautiful city of Kashi. Plagued by acute hunger, he used to wander about here and there every day. Lord Vishnu took the form of an old man, appeared before the poor brahmin and asked: "Friend, why are you wandering aimlessly?" The brahmin replied, "Sir, I am a very poor man. Unable to bear the pangs of hunger, I beg for alms. Sir, if you know a way out of this misery, please tell me." Lord Vishnu, who was in the guise of an old man, replied: "Oh Brahmin,

Lord Satyanarayana grants the wishes of all his devotees and removes their sorrows. So, you should perform His puja and reap its benefit." Lord Vishnu then explained the details of the Satyanarayana Vratha to the poor brahmin and disappeared.

The poor brahmin immediately resolved to perform the puja. After a sleepless night, he got up early in the morning and went to beg for alms, his mind fixed on only one thing, namely, the puja. That day he got a lot of money with which he bought fruits and milk, curd and honey and performed the puja with his friends and relatives. With Lord Narayana's grace he shed his poverty and lived a contented life. Every month on the full moon day he performed the puja and finally attained Moksha (salvation)."

Maharishi Soot thus told the assembled rishis the story which originally was narrated by Lord Vishnu to Narada Muni.

The rishis again addressed Maharishi Soot: "Oh the Great One, please tell us in detail who else performed the Satyanarayana puja."

Maharishi Soot continued: "One day when the poor brahmin from Kashi was observing the Satyanarayana Vratha, a wood-cutter entered his house and asked for water. Seeing the brahmin perform the puja, the wood-cutter inquired what the puja was about and what good it would bring. The brahmin, who had been bestowed with Lord Narayana's grace, spoke: "This is called Satyanarayana Vratha. Anyone who observes this Vratha will get all riches. I myself

have been bestowed with wealth." The wood-cutter was delighted to hear this. He learnt the proper way to perform the puja, ate the prasad that was offered and went his way.

With Lord Satyanarayana in his mind, the wood-cutter resolved that he would observe the Vratha with whatever he was going to make by selling firewood that day. He went to that part of the city where rich people lived, sold the firewood and made twice the normal profit. Pleased with his luck, the wood-cutter bought bananas, sugar, ghee, milk, curd, honey and wheat flour and performed the Satyanarayana puja with his friends and relatives. By Lord Narayana's grace, he acquired enormous wealth, lived comfortably and finally attained Moksha.

CHAPTER 3

Maharishi Soot continued: "Oh Best of Ascetics, I will now tell you the story further. In the olden days there lived a wise king by name Ulkamukh. He had mastered all his senses and always spoke truth. He used to go to the temple every day and give gifts to the brahmins. His lotus-faced wife was a pure and pious woman. One day, the royal couple was performing Satyanarayana puja at the banks of the river Bhadrasheela. At that time, a merchant called Sadhu sailed by. Seeing the King perform some puja, Sadhu stopped his boat, got off and addressed the King humbly: "Oh King, Would you kindly tell me what you are doing with such devotion and concentration?" The King replied: "Oh Sadhu, I have no children.

In order that I may be blessed with children, I am worshipping the Almighty Lord Satyanarayana."

On hearing this, Sadhu spoke humbly: "Oh King, please tell me how to perform the puja. I would like to observe the Vratha as I too have no children." The King told him all the details. Sadhu returned home and with great joy told his wife that they should perform Satyanarayana puja which will fulfill their desire to have children. He then resolved to perform the puja after the child was born.

Then, by the divine grace, Sadhu's wife Leelavathi conceived and in due course, a beautiful daughter was born to them. They named the child Kalavathi.

One day, Leelavathi reminded her husband of his promise to perform Satyanarayana puja. Sadhu told his wife that he would do the puja at the time of his daughter's wedding and got busy with his work.

In the meantime, Kalavathi grew up and blossomed into a lovely girl. Sadhu sent out messengers to find a suitable bridegroom for his daughter.

One of his messengers found a good-natured and handsome boy in a Vaishya family from Kanchan Nagar. Sadhu found the boy to be a suitable match for Kalavathi and celebrated his daughter's wedding with great pomp and show. But Sadhu completely forgot about the Satyanarayana puja and thus angered Lord Satyanarayana.

Then, one day Sadhu went on a business trip with his son-in-law. He stopped to trade at Ratnapur ^{Sara} which was ruled by King Chandraketu. Lord Satyanarayana placed a curse on Sadhu.

One day, some thieves robbed the king's treasury and were running away. The king's soldiers followed them in hot pursuit. The frightened thieves threw all the things they had robbed near Sadhu and his son-in-law and escaped. Finding the King's treasures near Sadhu and his son-in-law, the King's soldiers thought that they were the thieves, arrested them and brought them before the King. The King ordered them to be chained and thrown into prison. Because of Lord Narayana's Maya, nobody even listened to what Sadhu had to say in his defense.. King Chandraketu also confiscated all their merchandise.

Lord Narayana's curse did not spare even Sadhu's wife. Some robbers broke into her house and Leelavathi lost everything.

One day, Kalavathi was very hungry and ran out of the house. She wandered here and there and stopped at a house where Satyanarayana puja was being performed. She stayed at that place until the puja was finished and ate the prasada that was offered. When she reached home, it was late night. Leelavathi asked her where she had been. Kalavathi told her mother that she was listening to Satyanarayana Katha in somebody's house. Leelavathi at once remembered her husband's promise to perform the puja and resolved to observe the Satyanarayana Vrata herself. She collected all her relatives and friends and prayed to Lord Narayana

to forgive their sins.

Lord Satyanarayana was pleased with Leelavathi's prayers. He appeared before King Chandraketu in his dream and told him to release the two merchants from prison as they were not the real thieves. If the King failed to do so, Lord Narayana warned that his kingdom, wealth and children would all disappear.

Next morning, the king told his counsellors about his dream and ordered Sadhu and his son-in-law to be released and brought before him. The latter were frightened and stood before the king with bowed heads. The king talked to them gently and said, "You two have suffered a great deal because of your fate, but now there is nothing to fear." The king returned their merchandise, gave them new clothes and lots of gifts and bade them good-bye.

CHAPTER 4

Sadhu and his son-in-law loaded their boat with the riches given to them by the king and sailed homewards. Lord Satyanarayana wanted to test the Sadhu further. He took the form of an ascetic with a trident, appeared before Sadhu and asked him what he was carrying in his boat. Without realizing that the ascetic was indeed Lord Narayana in disguise, Sadhu laughed mockingly and said: "You brahmin, were you thinking of stealing my things? We do not have any valuables in the boat except vessels." Whereupon Lord

Narayana replied, "Oh Sadhu, so be it." The God then departed in great haste and stood by the seashore.

When Sadhu went into his boat, he discovered to his horror that the boat was filled with vessels just as he had falsely told the ascetic. Sadhu swooned at the sight but he was revived by his son-in-law who spoke: "This must be the curse of the ascetic. He must be a mystic. Let's go to him and ask for his forgiveness." The two merchants then went to the seashore where the ascetic was meditating. They fell at his feet and repeatedly begged for his forgiveness.

Pleased by Sadhu's devotion, the Lord said, "Sadhu, do not weep. You suffer because you have broken your promise time and again." On hearing this, Sadhu prayed to God, "Oh Lord, even Brahma and other devas, drowned in your Maya, cannot comprehend Your form completely. How can I, with my limited ability, comprehend your various forms? I pray according to my limited knowledge. Please show me Your true form and bless me."

Upon hearing this, God was pleased and granted his wishes restoring his merchandise in the boat and disappeared. The two merchants then joyfully sailed homewards. On reaching their hometown, they sent a messenger to their wives to inform them of their safe arrival.

At that time, Leelavathi and Kalavathi were performing Satyanarayana puja. Leelavathi quickly finished the puja and

asked her daughter to do so. She then hurried to the seashore to meet her husband. Kalavathi, in her eagerness to meet her husband, forgot to eat the prasad and rushed to the seashore. This action of hers angered Lord Satyanarayana. He caused the boat and her husband to drown in the sea.

Not finding her husband, Kalavathi started weeping. All were wonderstruck and frightened. Sadhu was at a loss to know what to do. Thinking that it was Lord Narayana's Maya, he announced to everybody that he would perform Satyanarayana puja and prayed to Lord Narayana again and again. At this, Lord Satyanarayana, the savior of the sinners, was very pleased and said, "Oh Sadhu, your daughter did not eat the prasad in her haste to see her husband, so I made him and the boat disappear. Let her go home, take the prasad and return." On hearing this, Kalavathi rushed home and ate the prasad. When she returned to the seashore, she found to her joy her husband and the boat. Then Sadhu returned home happily with his relatives and performed the Satyanarayana puja every full moon day. With God's grace, he enjoyed all the comforts in this world and finally attained salvation.

CHAPTER 5

Maharishi Soot continued: "Once there was a king called Thungadhwaaja who underwent a lot of misery after refusing the Satyanarayana prasad.

One day, after hunting, he was resting under a shady tree. Some cowherds were happily performing Satyanarayana puja nearby. The king, in his vanity, refused the prasad they offered. When he reached his palace, he found that his kingdom, his one hundred sons, his wealth and everything had disappeared. Then, it occurred to him that Lord Satyanarayana was probably angry with him. He went back to the cowherds, prostrated himself before Lord Satyanarayana and performed the puja with great devotion. Lord Satyanarayana showered his blessings and the king regained everything he had lost earlier. He lived happily and reached Vaikunta after death."

Maharishi Soot said, "Oh holy men, I have narrated to you the Satyanarayana Katha which was originally told by Lord Vishnu to Narada Muni. By observing this Vratha, mankind can attain salvation. In this Kaliyuga, observance of the Vratha can lead to gratification of one's wishes."

Thus ended the narration of Maharishi Soot after which Shownak and other rishis returned to their respective places.

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