

SRI SATYANARAYANA STORY

Chapter 1

Shaunaka and eighty eight thousand other rishis assembled at the forest of Naimisharanya and asked Maharishi Soota, the narrator of the Purana, "Oh Maharishi, please tell us how mankind can attain salvation." Maharishi Soota answered, "Even Narada Muni had asked Lord Vishnu, the consort of Lakshmi, the same question! Let me repeat what Lord Vishnu told Narada. Please listen carefully.

Narada, during one of his regular journeys to various worlds, came to the earth. There he saw people suffering as a result of their past deeds. To remove their suffering and offer salvation, Narada travelled to Vishnu Loka and 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 greeted him and asked, 'tell me what you want, and I will fulfill your wishes'. Narada replied, 'Oh Bhaga-wan, people on earth are suffering in many ways as a result of their 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 *Satya-narayana 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, '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 on a full moon day. One must invite his friends and relatives, and perform the puja with devotion offering fruits, ghee, milk, curd, butter, wheat flour, sugar and honey to God. After the puja is completed, he must read the story of Lord Satyanarayana, and then distribute prasadam to everyone. The puja thus performed, will bring fulfillment

Chapter 2

Maharishi Soota continued addressing the assembled rishis, "Oh rishis, I will now tell you who have all 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 in search of food. 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 benefits.' Lord Vishnu then explained the details of the Satyanarayana Vratha to the brahmin, and disappeared.

The poor brahmin 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, milk, curd and honey, and performed the puja with his friends and relatives. With Lord Satyanarayana'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 Soota continued, "One day when this brahmin from Kashi was observing Satyanarayana Vratha, a woodcutter entered his house and asked for water. Seeing the brahmin perform the puja, the woodcutter inquired about the puja. The brahmin, who had been bestowed with Lord Vishnu's grace, spoke, 'This is called Satyanarayana Vratha. One who observes the Vratha will be blessed by the Lord. I myself have been bestowed with wealth.' The woodcutter was delighted to hear this. He learned the proper way to perform the puja, ate the prasad that was offered, and went his way.

With Lord Satyanarayana in his mind, the woodcutter resolved that he would observe the Vratha with whatever he was going to earn 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 woodcutter bought bananas, sugar, ghee, milk, curd, honey and wheat flour, and performed the Satyanarayana puja with his friends and relatives. By Lord Satyanarayana's grace he too acquired enough wealth, lived comfortably, and finally attained Moksha."

Chapter 3

Maharishi Soota continued, "Oh best of ascetics, I will now tell you the story further. In the olden days there lived a wise king by the name Ulmamukha. He had mastered all his senses, and always spoke the truth. He used to go to the temple everyday, and offer 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 Bhadrashela. 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 Lord Almighty 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. By the divine grace, Sadhu's wife Leelavati soon conceived, and in due course, gave birth to a beautiful girl who was named Kalavati.

One day, Leelavati 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, Kalvati 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 his daughter, and celebrated her marriage with great pomp and show. But Sadhu completely forgot about the Satyanarayana Puja, and the Lord placed a curse on Sadhu.

Then, one day Sadhu went on a business trip with his son-in-law. He stopped to trade at Ratnapur which was ruled by king Chandraketu. During the time he was in Ratnapur, 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 things of 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's Maya, nobody even listened to what Sadhu had to say in his defense. King Chandraketu also confiscated all their merchandise.

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

One day Kalavati was very hungry, and went 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 very late in the night. Leelavati asked her where she had been. Kalavati told her mother that she was listening to Satyanarayana Katha in somebody's house. Leelavati at once remembered her husband's promise to perform the puja, and resolved to observe the Satyanarayana Vratha herself. She collected all her relatives and friends, prayed to Lord Satyanarayana to forgive their sins.

Lord Satyanarayana was pleased with Leelavati's prayers. He appeared before king Chandraketu in his dreams, 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 Satyanarayana 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 greatly because of your fate, but now there is nothing to fear.' The king returned their merchandise, gave them new clothes, and gifts, and bade them goodbye.

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 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 Satyanarayana 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 leaves and creeper plants.' Whereupon Lord Satyanarayana 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 leaves and creeper plants just as he had falsely told the ascetic. Sadhu swooned at the sight, but was revived by his son-in-law who spoke, 'This must be the curse of the ascetic. He must be a mystic. Let us go to him, and ask for his forgiveness.' The two merchants 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 various forms 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, Leelavati and Kalavati were performing Satyanarayana Puja. Leelavati quickly finished the puja, and asked her daughter to do so. She then hurried to the seashore to meet her husband. Kalavati, in her eagerness to meet her husband, forgot to eat the prasada, and rushed to the seashore. This action of her angered Lord Satyanarayana. He caused the boat and her husband to drown in the sea.

Not finding her husband, Kalavati started weeping. All were wonderstruck and frightened. Sadhu was at a loss to know what to do. Thinking that it was Lord Satyanarayana's Maya, he announced to everybody that he would perform Satyanarayana Puja, and prayed to Lord Satyanarayana 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 prasada in her haste to see her husband, and so I made him and the boat disappear. Let her go home, and take the prasada, and return.' On hearing this, Kalavati rushed home, and ate the prasada. When she returned to the seashore, she found, to her joy, her husband and the boat. Then Sadhu returned home happily with his relatives, performed Satyanarayana Puja on every full moon day. With God's grace, he enjoyed all the comforts in this world, and finally attained salvation."

Chapter 5

Maharishi Soota continued, "Once there was a king called Tungadhwaaja who underwent a lot of misery because he refused the Satyanarayana prasada.

One day after hunting, he was resting under a tree. Cowherds were happily performing Satyanarayana Puja nearby. The king in vanity, refused the prasada they offered. When he reached his palace, he found that his kingdom, all his 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. The Lord showered his blessings, and the king regained everything he had lost earlier. He lived happily, and reached Vaikunta after his death."

Maharishi Soota 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 Vrata, mankind can attain salvation. In this Kaliyuga, observance of the Vrata can lead to gratification of one's wishes."

Thus ended the narration of Maharishi Soota, after which Shaunaka and other rishis returned to their respective places.

Subham