

The Supreme Knowledge Of Brahman

Many years ago, in India, there lived a king named Janashruti (widely known). He ruled over the kingdom of Mahabrisha (meaning the big bull). He was a benevolent and generous ruler. He built rest houses for travelers along the roadside, distributed free food to the poor and needy, built hospitals for the sick and old and he taxed his subjects fairly. Quite naturally Janashruti was pleased with himself for having done so much for his kingdom. Unfortunately it did not take long for him to turn into a vain man.

One evening while he was relaxing on the terrace of his palace he saw two swans flying over him and conversing.

"Be careful while passing over the King Janashruti" one of them said. "The glow of his fame may burn you to ashes."

"You must be joking" replied the partner, "As if King Janashruti is greater than the humble cart-man Raikva!" The king understood their conversation and became thoughtful.

"Who is this Raikva?" The king pondered. "How could he earn more merit than me?" King Janashruti felt restless and could not sleep for the rest of the night.

The following morning, when the elaborate ritual of waking up royalty began, the king got irritated.

"Stop all these adulations and empty praises for me. I am not worthy of it."

The king's attendants were puzzled,

"What happened Maharaj?" asked the bard.

The king told the bard about the swan's conversation he had overheard.

"Now go and seek out Raikva," the King ordered, "He is the most pious of all men."

A massive search was soon launched to locate Raikva. Many days had passed and finally they were told by a peasant that Raikva was a cart-man in their village. All the king's men then saw Raikva, a poor cart driver, sitting on the ground and engaged in his own thought.

"Our king wishes to meet you" said an attendant.

"Well, here I am," said Raikva without budging from his place. "The king can come here if he wants to see me." The attendants were surprised. "What does our worthy king seek from this ordinary man?" The king was pleased to hear that Raikva was finally found. He ordered to make preparations to leave for Raikva's village the next morning. King Janashruti took with him an army of men with impressive presents of 600 cows, an expensive gold necklace and a chariot for Raikva.

Upon arriving at the village, King Janashruti introduced himself and said, "I have heard a great deal about you. I am told that you are one of the rarest person who has the personal experience of Brahman, the supreme Lord."

"Oh Raikva" the king continued, "I will give you all that you desire, and in return I ask that you impart me the supreme knowledge of Brahman."

Raikva smiled. "So you want to buy the divine knowledge!"

Then he scolded the king, "Oh ignorant king! The knowledge of Brahman cannot be purchased. It is not a commodity that can be bartered. You are not yet ready to receive the supreme knowledge. Go home."

The disappointed king returned to his palace. He became withdrawn, drowned in his sadness, always wondering, "What do I lack?" His sadness and sincere anxiety to know Brahman, made him humble. His ego disappeared and King Janashruti became a different person in just a few weeks. He then decided to go to Raikva once again.

Upon reaching the village, the king could not help himself. He fell at the feet of Raikva begging to impart him the knowledge of Brahman.

"Enlighten me" the king cried out "I have no peace. Your knowledge has more richness than my entire kingdom. Please give me a part of it. I beg you with all my sincerity."

This time Raikva saw that the king had lost all his vanity and the genuine desire for knowledge was evident. He picked up the king and said, "I bless you, O virtuous Janashruti. All the knowledge that is mine will now be yours as well."

Raikva then drew the king close to him and spoke at length, "The supreme knowledge cannot be imbibed unless one has shed one's ego. Only the humble can perceive the Brahman. Now that you attained the humility, come with me and I will share with you whatever little I have about the knowledge of our creator."

So saying Raikva accepted Janashruti as his disciple. The king could realize that Raikva was materialistically poor but spiritually rich. As time passed by, Janashruti received the gospels of Raikva and dedicated his job of royalty as a service to Brahman without taking the credit of his personal achievements.