

The Foolish Sage And The Jackal

In a monastery far away from human habitation lived a saint called Deva Sarma. He amassed a lot of wealth by selling clothes gifted to him by well-wishers and disciples. It became a burden for him to guard that wealth. Since he did not trust anyone, he put all his money into a bag and carried it with him wherever he went. Ashadhabhooti, an experienced cheat, noticed Deva Sarma carrying his bag always with him and assuming that it certainly contained something valuable, began planning to snatch it from him.

One day, the cheat met the saint and promptly fell on his feet and said, "Oh, know-all, I have realized that this life is an illusion; youth is fleeting and all familial ties are like a dream. Please show me the correct path that delivers me from all worldly ties."

Pleased with his humility, Deva Sarma said, "Child, you are the blessed one who has thought of renouncing worldly pleasures. Listen, however low his caste is, the person that chants 'Om Namahshivayah' and smears holy ash on his forehead, becomes Siva himself and knows no rebirth. I shall accept you as my portage but you must not enter the hermitage in the night because company is forbidden for saints. After initiation, you have to live in the hut at the entrance of the monastery."



Ashadhabhooti promised the saint that he would consider every sign from him as a command and carry it out. Satisfied, the saint accepted the cheat as his disciple. Ashadhabhooti too began making Deva Sarma happy by attending to every need of his. But seeing that the saint never separated the money-bag from his person, Ashadhabhooti thought, "the old man is very crafty and keeps the bag always with him. How can I snatch it from him? Shall I kill him?"



As the cheat was at a loss to achieve his goal, the son of a disciple came calling on the sage. The visitor invited Deva Sarma to come to his village and perform the sacred thread ceremony of his son. The saint accepted the invitation and set out for the village taking Ashadhabhooti with him.

On the way, the guru and his disciple had to cross a river. After bathing in the river and wanting to rest for a while, Deva Sarma took the

money bag and pushed it into a quilt he was carrying and told the disciple, "I have to respond to nature's call. I am leaving this holy quilt of Siva here. Keep an eye on it." The moment the guru went out of his sight, Ashadhabhooti collected the bag and fled the place.

With great trust in his disciple, Deva Sarma decided to spend time by joining a crowd watching two well-fed goats fighting ferociously. As blood was running down their heads, a jackal came there to feast on the blood the two goats were shedding. Deva Sarma saw the jackal entering the scene and thought that the jackal would surely die caught between the two warring goats. His surmise came true and the jackal died, gored by the two goats.



Brooding over the demise of the jackal, Deva Sarma returned to where he had left the money-bag with Ashadhabhooti and panicked when he found Ashadhabhooti missing. The holy quilt was there but not the money-bag in it. He began wailing, "Oh, trickster, what have you done? I have lost everything in this world." After a vain search for the trickster, the foolish saint returned home dejected.



Damanaka asked Karataka, "What do you learn from this episode?"

"You alone can tell me."

"The sage and the jackal have none to blame except themselves."

"In a similar situation, what should we do?"

Damanaka said, "Yes, I know what to do now. With my cunning I will create a rift between king Pingalaka and Sanjeevaka. Haven't you heard that though you cannot subdue the enemy with a volley of arrows, you can destroy him by your wit?"

"Wait," said Karataka. "Suppose the lion king and the roving bullock come to know of your plans to separate them, get ready to meet your end."

"My friend, you are too pessimistic. When time and tide are against you, don't give up. Wise men keep on trying till they succeed in getting what they want. Haven't you heard the elders saying?"

“The Goddess of Wealth favours the man who persists.
Pray God by all means, but put in your own effort.
Even if you don't succeed, you will be free of blame.”

Karataka was not convinced that Damanaka could create rift between the fierce lion king and the wise bullock.

Damanaka told him, “Here is how through cunning two crows, husband and wife, managed to save their children from a cobra. Every time, the wife hatched the eggs, a cobra would come and feast on the offspring. The couple asked a jackal who was their friend to show them the way. The jackal told the crow not to despair for there is nothing that a trick cannot achieve. That is how a crab killed a greedy crane that was preying on the fish in the lake. The female crow asked the jackal how the crab had killed the crane.”