

SRI SATYANARYANA STORY

Once, Shownak and 88,000 other rishis assembled at the forest Naimisharanya and asked Maharishi Sootha, the narrator of the Puranas, "Oh! Maharishi, please tell us how mankind can attain salvation?" Maharishi Sootha 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 earth. There he saw the people suffering as a result of their past deeds. To alleviate their sufferings and bring them salvation, Narada traveled to Vishnu Loka. There he found Lord Vishnu adorned with 'Sanhka', '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." Asked Lord Vishnu: "Narada, why have you come here? Tell me what you want and I would fulfill your wishes." To which Narada replied, "Oh, Bhagavan, 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, "Oh, Narada, 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 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 the god. After the puja is over, he must read the Satyanarayana Katha and distribute prasada to everybody. If the puja is thus performed, it will bring fulfillment of one's wishes. Particularly, in the Kaliyuga, this puja brings contentment."

CHAPTER 2

Maharishi Sootha continued addressing the assembled rishis, "Oh Rishis, I will tell you who all have observed the Satyanarayana puja in the past. Once, there lived a very poor Brahmin in the beautiful city of Kasi. 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 poor 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." Whereupon, Lord Vishnu, who was in the guise of an old man, replied, "Oh, Brahmin, Lord Satyanarayana grants his devotee's wishes and removes their sorrows. So you should perform his Puja and reap its benefits." Lord Vishnu then explained the details of the Satyanarayana Vrata 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 relatives and friends. With Lord Satyanarayana's grace, he shed his poverty and lived a contented life. Every month on the full moon day he performed and finally attained Moksha (salvation).

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

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

Maharishi Sootha continued: One day when the poor Brahmin from Kasi was observing the Satyanarayana Vrata, 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 Vrata. Anyone who observes this Vrata will get all riches. I myself have been bestowed with wealth." The wood-cutter was delighted to hear this. He learned the proper way to perform the puja, ate the prasada that was offered and went his way.

With Lord Satyanarayana in his mind, the wood-cutter resolved that he would observe the Vrata 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 and lived comfortably and attained moksha (salvation).

CHAPTER 3

Maharishi Sootha 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 Ulkamukha. 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 the 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 Almighty Lord Satyanaryana."

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 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 Kaanchana 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 Ratnapura that 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 escaped. Finding the king's treasure near Sadhu and his son-in-law, the king's soldiers 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 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 Satyanarayana Vratha herself. She collected all her relatives and friends and prayed to Lord Satyanarayana 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 be destroyed.

Next morning, the king told his counselors about his dream and ordered

Sadhu and his son-in-law to be released. 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 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 son-in-law loaded their boat with the riches given to them by the king and sailed homeward. 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 Natyarana replied, "Oh Sadhu, so be it." The ascetic 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 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 knowledge, comprehend your various forms? I pray within my limited knowledge. Please show me your true form and bless me."

Upon hearing his prayer, God was pleased and granted his wishes, restoring his merchandise in the boat, and disappeared. The two merchants then joyfully sailed homeward. 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 prasada and rushed to the seashore. This action of hers angered Lord Satyanarayana. He caused the ship 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 that he would perform Satyanarayana puja and prayed to Lord 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, so I made him and the boat disappear. Let her go home, take the prasada and return." On hearing this, Kalavathi rushed and took 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 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.

CHPATER 5

Maharishi Sootha continued: "Once there was a king called Thungadhwaaja who underwent a lot of misery after refusing the Satyanarayana prasada." 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 prasada they offered. When he reached his palace, he found that his kingdom, his 100 sons, his wealth and everything was destroyed. 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 Vaikuntha after death.

Maharishi Sootha said, "Oh holy men, I have narrated to you the Satyanaryana 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 Sootha after which Shownak and other rishis returned to their respective places.

-oOo-

Note: This Puja consists of two distinct parts. In the first part, pujas are performed to Lord Ganesha, to Navagraha, to Ashtadikpalaka, to Panchalokapalakas and to Satyanaryana. The second part consists of recital of the above stories by the devotees and distribution of prasada. Temple can perform this Puja on every full-moon day for a year on your behalf, and mail you the prasada.