

CHILDREN'S CORNER

The gift of an Axe

Long, long ago there were two brothers. Their names were Hari and Ravi. Both of them were very devoted to their parents. They were always fighting to prove their mettle to their parents. Each one thought that he was serving the parents better. This made their parents very unhappy.

One day, the father, a learned man, smiled and told his wife that he could not watch the two of them fighting to please them always. If they continue to have such selfish desires of doing better than the other and outsmarting each other then, such a desire would lead to greed and eventually separation between them. So he wanted to teach them a lesson. He called his sons and told them to go to the neighboring town to make a living. He wanted them to come back home exactly a month later and tell him how they had fared. The father would then decide which son was more resourceful.

Both of them took up the challenge and left home immediately. Hari went north and Ravi headed south. Hari apprenticed with a blacksmith and worked hard. Though he was good at the trade, he realized that he had a long way to go. So too Ravi, worked hard as an assistant to a woodcarver. He was good at carving too but knew that he needed to work hard to refine his work. At the end of one month, both received their salaries. They had made almost the same amount of money. They decided to buy presents for their parents secretly without each other's knowledge.

Hari moulded the blade of an axe. Ravi also thought of an axe, but he carved a beautiful handle. When they reached home, the father received their gifts. He laughed and said, "Of what use is a beautifully carved handle without the sharp blade of an axe? Of what use is a sharp axe without a nice handle to hold?"

The father went on to explain that though the brothers were two different beings with different natures, they must be bonded together with a purpose in life, just like an axe with a sharp blade and a beautifully carved handle.

To cut the tree of ignorance, you need the fine axe of a sharp intellect. The handle with its carvings is the body that should be kept strong and healthy.



How does God Act?

A king once posed four questions:

1. What does God eat?
2. When does God weep?
3. When does God laugh?
4. What is God doing now?

Nobody could give a satisfactory reply. At last, a poor farmer came along and answered all the questions. He replied:

1. God eats away the ego of man.
2. God weeps when man forgets him.

3. God laughs twice: Once when two brothers partition a piece of land saying this much is mine, that much is yours; and again when a doctor assures a patient, "I shall certainly cure you."

To the last question, he would say nothing. When the king repeated the question, the farmer said, "Let us trade places and then you put the question to me." The king readily agreed. The farmer's reply was, "This is what God is doing now, elevating the poor and humbling the rich."

- Swami Shantananda Puri

