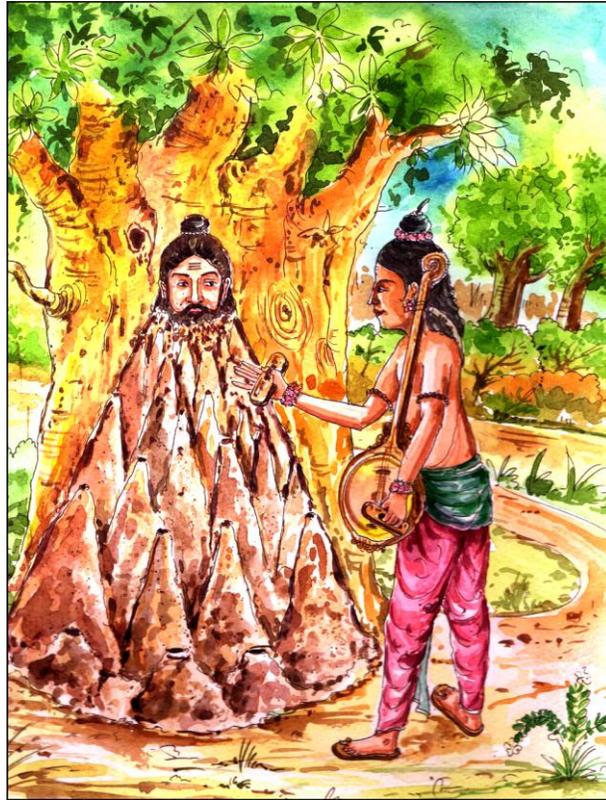


NARADA AND THE TWO YOGIS



The great saint Narada was passing, one day, through a forest. There, in the middle of the forest, he saw a large ant-hill. When ants are digging into the earth to make an underground nest, the soil they carry away is put in a heap nearby. It makes quite a big mound. Narada looked at this ant-hill and was surprised to see that at the top of the ant-hill was a yogi's head.

'What is this?' he thought. 'How can there be a yogi's head at the top of an ant-hill?

He went closer and saw that the yogi's eyes were shut.

'What are you doing here in the middle of an ant-hill?' Narada said in a loud voice.

The yogi opened his eyes and looked at Narada.

'Oh, Narada, it is you!' he said. 'How fortunate I am that you have come this way. I came to the forest to meditate, and I have been sitting here meditating for so long that these ants have built their ant-hill round me. Where are you going, Narada?'

'I am on my way to heaven,' Narada replied. 'I am going to see God.'

'Oh, will you see God?' the yogi said, 'When you see Him, would you ask Him a question for me?'

'Certainly,' Narada replied. 'What question do you want me to ask Him?'

'What I want to know is,' the yogi answered, 'how much longer must I sit here meditating? When shall I see God and realize Him so that I do not have to be born again and again? Would you please ask Him that for me?'

'Yes, certainly,' Narada assured him. 'I will ask God your questions.'

Narada then went on his way through the forest. After some time he began to hear someone singing in a loud voice. Narada walked on, and then he saw the owner of the loud voice. A yogi was jumping about, singing and dancing. As soon as the yogi saw

Narada, he ran to him and said, 'Narada, Narada, I am so glad to see you. Where are you going?'

'I am going to heaven,' Narada replied.

'Oh, are you going to heaven?' cried the yogi. 'Then will you do something for me?'

'Yes, certainly,' Narada said. 'What can I do for you in heaven?'

'Narada,' the yogi replied, 'I know that I shall have to be born again and again until my heart becomes so pure that I can see God, but what I want to know is, How many times must I be reborn? Please ask God that for me will you?'

'Yes, certainly,' Narada assured him. 'I will ask God your question.'

Narada walked on and on through the forest, and at last he reached heaven. Narada stayed in heaven for some time, and then went back to earth. He travelled about the earth, visiting many different places, and one day he happened to walk through that same forest, and there he met the yogi who was meditating in the middle of ant-hill.

'Oh, Narada,' said the yogi, 'did you ask God about me?'

'Yes,' Narada replied, 'I did.'

'You did? What did He say?' asked the yogi eagerly.

'God told me,' Narada said, 'that you must go on meditating through four more lives. Then you will be free.'

'What? Four more lives?' exclaimed the yogi in despair. 'Oh, that is terrible! I have meditated and meditated. I have meditated so long that the ants have built their ant-hill round me! Now you say even that is not enough. I have four more lives! Oh, I am so sad!' And the yogi began to weep.

'You have only four more lives,' Narada said quietly. Then he went on his way.

Soon he met the yogi who was singing and dancing.

'Oh, Narada,' said the singing yogi, 'did you ask God about me?'

'Yes,' replied Narada, 'I did.'

'You did? What did He say?' asked the singing yogi eagerly.

'Well, now,' Narada replied, 'you see this tamarind tree? How many leaves has it? Count them. As many leaves as there are on this tamarind tree, so many times you will be born again, and then your heart will become pure and you will see God.'

'Oh, how wonderful!' cried the singing yogi. 'Narada, your news has made me very happy. I did not think that I would see God so soon. As many leaves as there are on this tamarind tree, that number of times I shall be reborn! Oh, Narada, that is but a short time-and then I shall be free!' Then the yogi began to dance and sing in great joy.

At that moment there was a flash of light, and a voice came from heaven.

'My child,' said the voice to the singing yogi, 'you are free at this moment. God is pleased with you because you have great patience and strength of mind. The tamarind tree has a great many leaves and yet you are willing to be born again and again as many times as there are leaves on that tree. That shows that you are steadfast and firm in your decision to see God and win your freedom. Therefore God has made you free here and now. You will not be born again, but you will live with God.'

Source : Puran