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## SHREE SATYANAARAYAN VRATHA KATHAA

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(The following stories highlighting the significance and importance of Sathyanaarayana Vratha, are an integral part of the Sathyanaaraayan Pooja and form the second part of the Pooja. The first part comprises of poojas to Lord Ganesha, the Navagrahaas, the Ashta Dikpaalakaas, Pancha Loka Paalakaas and to Lord Sathyanaaraayana. The Vratha Kathaa is divided into five chapters.)

### CHAPTER 1

Once Shounaka and 88,000 other sages assembled in the woods of Dandakaaranya and asked Maharshi Sootha, the narrator of the Puraanaas, “O holy sage, tell us how mankind can attain salvation.” Sootha replied, “Once, Naarada Muni asked Lord Vishnu, the consort of Lakshmi, this very question. I will tell you what he told to Naarada. Listen attentively. Once, Naarada, during his wanderings of various worlds came to the earth. There he saw people suffering in various ways as a result of their past deeds. To alleviate their sufferings and to help them attain salvation, he (Naarada) traveled to Vishnu Loka. He saw Lord Vishnu adorned with Conch, Chakra, Gadaa and the Lotus in His four hands and a garland around his neck. Naarada spoke in his usual humble voice, ‘Oh Supreme Lord, the saviour of the destitute and the distressed, I prostrate at Thy feet.’ Lord Vishnu asked, ‘Naarada, why have you come here? Tell me what you want and I will fulfil your wishes’. Naarada said, ‘Bhagwaan, people on the earth are suffering in numerous ways as a result of their past ill deeds. Please bestow Thy Grace and reveal to me how they can be helped.’ Lord Vishnu replied, ‘Mankind can rid itself of all its sorrows by performing a pooja called Sathyanaaraayana pooja. This pooja, when performed according to the prescribed rites, brings happiness, peace of mind and wealth in this life and salvation hereafter.’ Hearing this, sage Naarada was filled with joy and addressed the Lord thus, ‘O Lord, in Your infinite grace, please tell me the details of the pooja that you have just mentioned, how and when to perform it and who has performed it in the past’. The Lord replied, ‘This pooja can be performed by anyone in any season on a full moon day. One should gather his friends and relatives and perform the pooja with devotion and

offer fruits, flowers, ghee, milk, yogurt, butter, wheat flour, sugar and honey to the Lord. At the end of the pooja, he should read the Satyanaaraayana Kathaa and distribute the Prasad made of the above items to everyone present. If the pooja is thus performed with devotion, it brings fulfillment of all one's wishes. During this Kaliyuga, in particular, it is the best way to earn contentment.'

## CHAPTER 2

Sage Sootha continued addressing the assembled rishis, "O rishis, I will tell you who all have performed Sathyanarayana Pooja in the past. Once, there lived a very poor brahim in the beautiful city of Kaashi. Stung by acute hunger, he used to roam about in search of alms. Lord Vishnu took pity on him and appeared before him in the guise of an old man and asked, "Friend, why are you wandering about aimlessly? The poor man replied, "Sir, I am a very poor man. Unable to bear the pangs of hunger, I go about begging for food and alms. If you know the way out of this misery, please advise me." Lord Vishnu replied, "Oh brahman, Lord Sathyanarayana grants all the wishes of His devotees and removes their sorrow. So, you should perform His pooja and reap the rewards." The Lord then explained the details of the Sathyanarayana Vratha and disappeared.

The poor brahim immediately resolved to perform the pooja. After a restless night, he got up early in the morning and went on his usual round for alms. That day, he was blessed with lots of money with which he bought fruits, milk, yogurt, honey etc and performed the Pooja with his friends and relatives in attendance. With Lord Sathyanarayana's grace, he was able to shed his poverty and live a contented life thereafter. From then onwards, he made it a point to perform the Sathyanaarayana Pooja devotedly every month on the full moon day, eventually earning his salvation. Sootha added that the story was earlier told by Lord Vishnu himself to sage Narada.

The assembled sages then asked Sootha, "Please tell us who else has performed this pooja." Sootha continued, "One day, when the brahmin from Kaashi was observing the Sathyanaarayana Vratha, a thirsty wood cutter came there asking for water. Seeing the man performing the Pooja, the enquired what the Pooja was about and what good it would bring. The brahmin, who had by now earned the grace of the Lord, replied, "This is called Sathyanaarayana Vratha. Anyone observing the Vratha gets all his wishes fulfilled and earns all the riches. I have been bestowed with wealth after observing the same." The wood cutter was delighted to hear this. He

gathered all the details of performing the pooja, ate the Prasad offered to him and went away.

With a mind filled with devotion to the Lord, the wood cutter resolved to observe the Vratha with whatever he would earn by selling fire wood that day. Fortuitously, he went to that part of the city where rich people lived, sold the fire wood and made twice the normal profit. Pleased with his luck, he bought bananas, sugar, milk, ghee, yogurt, honey and wheat flour and performed Sathyanaarayana Pooja with his friends and relatives in attendance. With the Lords's grace, he earned enormous wealth and lived comfortably thereafter, earning salvation in the end.

### CHAPTER 3

Sage Sootha continued, "O Best of ascetics, I will tell you another story. In the olden days, there lived a wise king named Ulkamukha. He had mastered his senses and was known for his truthfulness. He used to visit temples every day and give gifts to the Brahmins present there. His wife was a pure and pious woman. One day, the royal couple was performing Sathyanaarayana Pooja on the banks of the river Bhadrashela. At that time, a merchant called Saadhu sailed in. Seeing the king perform the Pooja, the merchant got off his boat and addressed the king thus, "O king, please tell me what you are doing with such devotion and concentration." The king replied, "O friend, I have no children. In order that I may be blessed with a child, I am worshipping Lord Almighty Sathyanaarayana." Saadhu spoke humbly, "O king, please tell me how to perform this Pooja. I too would like to perform the Vratha as I am childless too." The king told him all the details. Saadhu returned home and with great joy, told his wife Leelaavathi that they should perform the Sathyanaarayana Pooja which will fulfil their desire to have children. He then resolved to perform the Pooja after the child was born. By divine grace, Saadhu's wife conceived and in course of time, gave birth to a beautiful daughter. The couple named the child 'Kalaavathi'.

One day, Leelaavathi reminded her husband about his vow to perform the Sathyanaarayana Pooja. Saadhu told her that he would fulfil his promise at the time of his daughter's wedding and got busy with his work. Kalaavathi grew up and blossomed into a beautiful girl. Saadhu sent out messengers to find a suitable bridegroom for his daughter. One of the messengers found a good natured and bright boy in Kanchana Nagar. Saadhu too found the boy the right match for his daughter and performed their wedding with pomp and

gaiety. But he completely forgot about his vow to perform Sathyanaarayana Pooja thus earning the displeasure of the Lord.

Days passed and one day Saadhu, accompanied by his son-in-law, went on a business trip. They stopped at Rathnapura ruled by King Chandraketu. The Lord had placed a curse on Saadhu which was working its way unseen by anyone. That night, some thieves robbed the king's treasury and were running away with their booty. The king's soldiers sensed the robbery in good time and were following the robbers in hot pursuit. The frightened thieves threw their entire loot near Saadhu and fled. Finding the king's treasure near Saadhu and his son-in-law, the king's soldiers arrested them and brought them before the king for justice. After due inquiry, the king ordered them to be chained and thrown into the prison. Because of the Lord's maaya, no one was ready to listen to what he had to say in his defence. Chandraketu had all their merchandise confiscated. Lord Satyanarayan's displeasure did not spare Saadhu's wife either. Some robbers broke into her house and carried off everything from their house.

One day Kalaavathi was very hungry and ran out of the house in search of food. She wandered here and there and finally came to a house where a Sathyanaarayana Pooja was being performed. She stayed at the place till the Pooja was over and ate the prasada offered to her. When she reached home it was late in the evening. Her mother asked her where she had been all the time. Kalaavathi told her that she had been listening to the Sathyanaarayana katha in somebody's house. Leelaavathi at once remembered her husband's vow to perform the Pooja. She decided to observe the Vratha herself. She collected all her friends and relatives and performed the pooja praying to the Lord to forgive their sins.

Lord Sathyanaarayana was pleased with Leelaavathi's prayers. He appeared before King Chandraketu in the latter's dream and told him to release the two merchants as they are not the real thieves. If he failed to do so, he may lose his wealth and children too and his kingdom could be destroyed. The next morning, the king told his councilors about his dream and with their consent ordered Saadhu and his son-in-law to be released from prison. The frightened merchants stood before the king but the latter spoke to them gently and said, "You have suffered a great deal because of your fate but now there is nothing to fear. I set you free as I have found you to be innocent." The king returned their merchandise, gave them new clothes and lots of gifts and bade them good bye.

## CHAPTER 4

Saadhu and his son-in-law boarded their boat with the riches given by the king and sailed homeward. The Lord wanted to test Saadhu further. He appeared before him in the form of an ascetic with a trident in hand and asked him what he is carrying in his boat. Without realizing that the ascetic was the Lord himself in disguise, Saadhu laughed mockingly and said, "O brahim, are you thinking of robbing my things? We have only some vessels in the boat, no valuables," he said. The Lord responded saying, "So be it," and departed in the direction of the seashore. When Saadhu went to his boat a little later, he discovered to his horror that the boat contained nothing more than a few vessels, as he had falsely told the ascetic. Saadhu swooned at the sight but his son-in-law helped him to revive and said, "This must be the curse of the ascetic. He must be a mystic. Let us go to him and ask for his forgiveness." The two merchants went to the seashore where the ascetic was meditating and fell at his feet. They sought his forgiveness for the falsehood they had uttered.

Pleased by Saadhu's confession, the Lord said, "Saadhu, do not weep. You are suffering because you have broken your promise time and again. Saadhu said with folded hands, "O Lord, even Brahma and other devaas drowned in your Maaya cannot comprehend your numerous forms. How can I with my limited wisdom? I behave as guided by my limited knowledge. Please show me your true form and bless me." Lord Satyanaarayana was pleased with these prayers and granted his wishes. He restored all the merchandise in the boat and disappeared. The two merchants then sailed homeward full of joy. On reaching their hometown, they sent a messenger to their wives informing them of their safe return.

At that time, Leelaavathi and Kalaavathi were performing Satyanaaraayana Pooja. Leelaavathi quickly finished her pooja and asked her daughter to do so. She then hurried to the seashore to meet her husband. Kalaavathi, in her eagerness to meet her husband, forgot to eat the prasaad and rushed to the seashore. This action of hers greatly displeased the Lord who caused her husband and the ship to disappear in the sea. Unable to find her husband, Kalaavathi started crying. All those present were wonderstruck and frightened too. Saadhu was at a loss to know what to do. Concluding that it is Lord Satyanaaraayana's maaya, he announced that he would perform Satyanaarayana Pooja and prayed to the Lord in earnest. At this, Lord Satyanaaraayana, the saviour of the sinners, was pleased and said, "O

Saadhu, your daughter did not eat the prasaad in her eagerness to see her husband, so I made him and the boat to disappear. Let her go home, take the prasaad and come back.” Kalaavathi rushed home and took the prasaad as directed. When she returned to the seashore, she was delighted to find her husband and the boat in tact. Saadhu then returned home in a happy mood along with his relatives. Thereafter, he made it a practice to perform Satyanaarayana Pooja every full moon day and earned the Lord’s grace in full measure. He enjoyed all the comforts in this life and finally attained salvation.

## CHAPTER 5

Sage Sootha continued, “Once there was a king called Thungadhwaaja who suffered a lot of misery after refusing to accept Sathyanaarayana prasaad. One day, during a hunting expedition he was resting in the shade of a tree tired and exhausted. Some cowherds were performing Sathyanaarayana Pooja nearby and offered the prasaad to him. The king, in his vanity, refused to accept the prasaad and went away. When he reached his palace, he found to his dismay that his kingdom, his 100 sons, his wealth and everything else had been destroyed. While fathoming the reason, it occurred to him that he might have incurred the displeasure of Lord Sathyanaarayana by refusing to accept the pooja prasaad. Full of remorse, he went back to the cowherds, prostrated before the Lord and performed the Sathyanaarayana pooja with great devotion. Lord Sathyanaarayana showered his blessings readily and the king regained everything he had lost earlier. He lived happily thereafter and attained salvation.

Sage Sootha said, “O holy men, I have narrated to you the Sathyanaarayana Katha which was first told by Lord Vishnu to sage Naarada. Even in this Kaliyuga, by observing this vratha one can attain all one’s wishes.”

Thus ends the narration of Sathyanaarayana Katha.