
Knowledge That Saves



Rama Sastry was a great pandit (well educated man) who lived in a village in India. He knew many sastras by heart. He could argue brilliantly and quote profusely from memory. In any debate he always won. The simple villagers would wonder how small a head could contain so much knowledge. However, Rama Sastry's pride was as huge as his knowledge.

One day he wanted to attend a debate to be held in a town on the other side of the river. The winner in the debate would get a big reward. The pandit came to the riverside. He hailed a boatman and haggled with him for a long time. Finally the boatman agreed to ferry him across the river for 25 Rupees.

The pandit got into the boat. He was the only passenger in it. So to spend the time

he started conversing with the boat man. He boasted about the number of Sastras he had learnt. He mentioned the different scholars he had defeated in debates. The pandit said, "My dear boatman, the purpose of human life is to learn as many sastras

as possible. What sastras have you studied?" The boatman humbly said that he was illiterate. But everyday he prayed to God. The pandit said it would not do. Had he not studied the Vedas? The boatman said he had not even heard the name. The pandit declared "You have wasted a quarter of your life. I myself have taken 10 years to master the Vedas. Alright. Tell me, have you read atleast the Bhagavad Geeta?" The boatman hung his head and said, "Master, I know nothing about Geeta." The pandit smiled

scornfully and said, "Then half your life has been wasted."

After a few minutes, the pandit asked him again, "You have read the Ramayana and

Mahabharatha, I suppose?" The boatman remained silent. The pandit said "I can only pity you. You have wasted three-fourths of your life. Try to learn something in the quarter of your life left." The boatman looked sad.

As they were talking a storm began to blow. The boat started to rock violently. It looked that the boat would topple and sink. The boatman addressed the pandit with joint palms. "Venerable sir, I am afraid we have to abandon the boat. I

hope you know swimming, Sir"

The pandit was taken aback. "No, no. I had no time to learn swimming. I cannot float on the water even for a few minutes. Please save me!" The boat man replied, "I cannot save you. Only the knowledge of swimming can save you. It is true that I do not know any of the holy texts. I have wasted three-fourths of my life. But I know swimming, that will save my life. What a pity you have not learnt swimming. You have wasted the whole of your life. With these parting words the illiterate boatman swam to safety. The learned pandit found the bottom of the river.

Knowledge is not for show but for use. It should make you humble, not proud.

