

ONCE there was a man who had seven sisters. On the day of Bhaiya Panchmi he said to his mother, "I will go to my sister's place for the *tilak* ceremony." His mother said, "Son, all the rivers and the riverlets have risen. How will you go? It is better not to go." But he did not listen to his mother and started off for his sister's place.

On his way he came across a river. The river said to the brother, "I am going to drown you. The brother said, "On my return journey, after my sister has put *tilak* on me, I shall make you an offering of a *chunri* (long scarf). But please do spare me now." So the river allowed him to go. After going a little further he met a snake. The snake said to the brother, "I am going to bite you." The brother replied, "On my return journey from my sister's place I shall make you an offering of a bowl of milk. So please don't bite me."

On hearing this the snake allowed the brother to proceed to his sister's place. He was still some distance away from his sister's place when he was caught by a gang of robbers. The robbers said to him, "We are going to kill you." The brother said, "Please don't kill me yet. You can kill me after I come back from my sister's place." He begged them to spare him but the robbers did not heed his plea and killed him.

In the evening when Lord Shiva and Parvati were passing by, Parvatiji noticed a number of eagles and crows circling a certain spot. Parvatiji said to Shivji, "Let us go and find out what is the matter." Shivji tried to stop Parvatiji but she did not listen to him. She went to that spot and found the brother lying dead. She felt very sorry for the brother. She said to Shivji, "The poor fellow was on his way to his sister's place for Bhaiya Duj. She must be waiting for him. So please bring him back to life or else I will keep sitting here until you fulfill my wish."

"You always act obstinately like this." Shivji said to her. But he saw

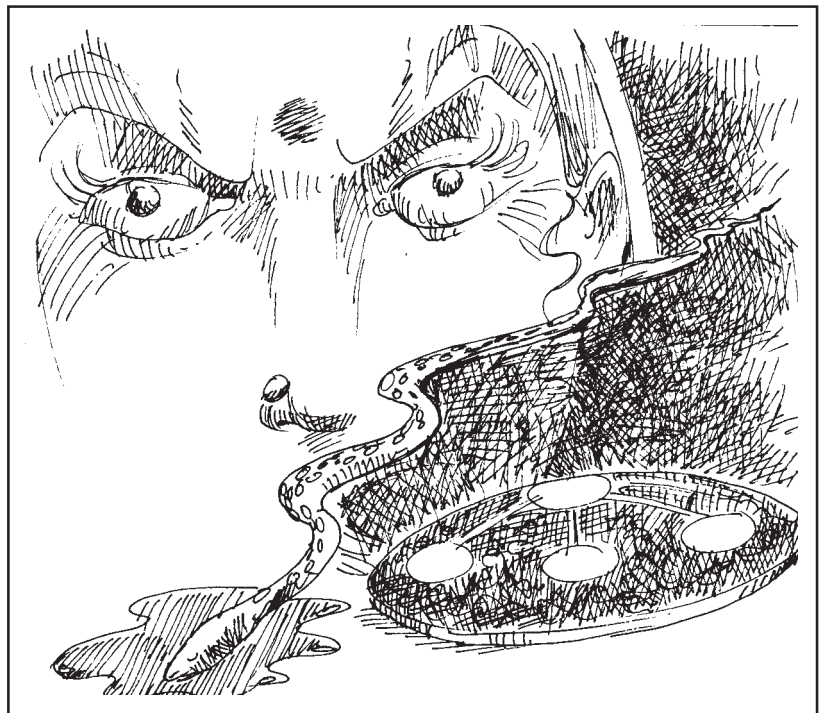
Waiting For Brother

that it was difficult to reason with Parvatiji. Defeated by her stubbornness, Shivji finally approached the dead brother. Then he noticed that the smallest finger of the brother's hand was missing. So Shivji told Parvatiji, "A crow has carried one of this man's fingers to his sister's place and dropped it there."

It so happened that his sister was spinning thread from cotton and the thread kept breaking again and again. When the crow dropped her brother's finger in her courtyard she immediately recognised the finger by the ring on it. Knowing for certain that it was her brother's finger, she kept it. Meanwhile Shivji came to her place in the guise of a yogi, begging for alms. When the sister went in to get some

flour for him, Shivji got his chance — he picked up the brother's finger. After receiving alms, Shivji took the finger to the dead brother's body and brought him back to life.

The brother now went to his sister's place for the *tilak* ceremony. He said to his sister, "Sister, I am so hungry!" His sister was so happy and overwhelmed that she went to her neighbour and asked her, "My beloved brother has come, what shall I cook for him?" Her neighbour was quite amused and said jokingly to the sister, "On this special occasion you should wash your kitchen not with water but with oil and cook rice in *ghee* instead of water." The sister did not realise that her neighbour was making fun of her. She washed the kitchen with oil and put the rice in a



potful of *ghee* for cooking. But because of the oil, the kitchen became very slippery and the sister kept falling down again and again. And the rice just wouldn't get cooked! Her brother said to her, "The food is still not ready! How much more time will you take?" Then the brother saw that rice was being cooked in *ghee* and the kitchen was very slippery. He then said, "Sister, I know you love me very much but you will still have to wash the kitchen with water and also cook the rice in plain water. Afterwards you can pour as much *ghee* in the rice as you like." It was only after the sister did what her brother suggested that the rice got cooked properly. Then, after having a hearty meal, the brother went to sleep.



In the morning when the brother was about to leave, his sister gave him some *laddoos* (sweets) which she had prepared for his return journey. When her children got up in the morning they said, "Ma, give some of those *laddoos* which you gave to *Mama* (Uncle) to us also." But when she started to give the *laddoos* to her children, she noticed that the *laddoos* were red, soaked in blood. After checking she found that in the darkness of night, while she was grinding the flour, a snake had gotten ground up in the flour. The sister became frantic and ran out shouting, "Has anyone seen a sister's brother and a traveller?" One man said, "All men are their sisters' brothers and all are travellers. But anyway, over there is a man sleeping under a tree." She was greatly relieved to find that the man sleeping under the tree was her own brother. She asked him, "Brother,

you haven't eaten the *laddoos*, have you?" The brother said despondently, "Sister, I am so worried about the problems I have to face on my way back, I just haven't given a thought to your *laddoos*." She told her brother about the snake getting crushed while she was grinding the flour for the *laddoos*. Her brother said, "Sister, you have saved me this time, but there are other misfortunes waiting for me." He then told her about the robbers, the snake, and the river. The sister said, "Brother, don't you worry. I shall come along with you and tackle each one of these misfortunes." She took along a sackful of money for the robbers, a bowl of milk for the snake and some *chudis* (ivory bangles) and a *chunri* for the river. Pacifying all three obstacles with the appropriate offerings, both brother and sister were able to proceed further. Then the sister wanted to have a bath and so she went to a secluded spot. There she

saw a man chiselling rock, so she asked him, "Who are you doing this for?" The man said, "For a brother who has seven sisters. His misfortune will start with his marriage ceremony. When he is about to leave for the *barat* (marriage procession) through the front door, the door will fall upon him. If he escapes unharmed then the tree under which the wedding party is going to camp is going to fall on him. Even if he survives these two calamities, a snake is going to bite him while he goes around the sacred fire with his bride. And even if he is able to ward off all three of these misfortunes, he is going to be bitten again by a snake on his wedding night." The sister asked, "Is

there any these misfortunes can be way averted?" The man said, "Yes, there is a way out. His favourite sister should start abusing him. At the same time she should find a way to tackle all of his problems. She should continue abusing him till this spell of misfortunes is over."

So when the sister continued along with her brother, she abused him all the way. When the two reached home every one said, "Of all the sisters she was the one who loved him best. What has gone wrong with her? Now she abuses him so badly!"

Finally, the day dawned for the brother's marriage ceremony. After the ceremony when the *barat* was all set to leave the sister said, "The *barat* will not leave by the front door. It will leave by the back door." She would not listen to anyone and so the *barat* had to leave by the back door. And then the front door fell down!

The sister accompanied the *barat*. After some time, when the *barat* was

about to camp under *peepal* tree, she said, "We are not going to camp under the *peepal* tree. We are going to camp in the open field." So the *barat* camped in the open field. And then the *peepal* tree fell down!

The sister accompanied her brother when he did the sacred rounds. But as soon as they reached the *mandap*, a snake bit the brother. The sister said, "No one should leave this place till I come back." She crossed the seven seas to go to Shobha the *dhoban* (washer woman). There she started doing all of Shobha's work quietly, without showing herself. Shobha *dhoban* was very pleased. She said, "Who is doing all my work? I am very pleased. If that person discloses herself to me I shall grant whatever boon that person chooses to ask me for." Then the sister disclosed herself and said, "My brother, who is the only brother of seven sisters and who is the only son of his parents, is lying dead in the marriage *mandap*. Yet I have been religiously observing *Bhaiya Panchmi*. So please grant me my brother's life." After getting this boon, as soon as she reached the wedding *mandap*, her brother came back to life. Every one said, "She really must have some magical power; that is why so many disasters have been averted."

When the *barat* came back home the sister said, "I am going to sleep with my brother and *bhabhi* (brother's wife). Every one tried to argue with her but she stuck to her word. At midnight a terribly frightening serpent came in. The alert sister quickly covered it with her shield and crushed it to death. When she didn't get up in the morning there was an uproar. People said, "What is the matter? Why hasn't that disgraceful, abusive sister gotten up?" When people knocked at the door she said, "Let all the family and relations collect here, and only then will I get up." When everybody had collected she opened



the door and came out. She told the whole story and said, "My brother came to my place on *Bhaiya Panchmi* for *tilak*. Because of this he had to face so many disasters. To save his life I left my infant son in his cradle, my husband on the bed, and the milk boiling on the oven. Let God be thanked that I was successful in my mission."

Because of what this brother and sister had to go through, no sister should wait so long for her brother on the day of *Bhaiya Panchmi*. Instead of waiting very long for her

brother, she should apply *tilak* to one of her cousin-brothers or to one of her brothers-in-law or to Thakurji. If none of these are available then she should apply *tilak* to a coconut and then take some food to break her fast.

**Translated from Hindi by
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