

ONCE upon a time there was a poor mother who had two children, Girish and Girija. Both children were very active and intelligent. When Girish and Girija grew into youths, one year there was so little rain that a drought struck the land. The people went to the king to request him to do something. The king called the *pandits* and astrologers to find out the reason and the solution for the dry spell. At last they came to know that outside the boundaries of the state there was a *rakshas* (monster) who had rain seed; if someone could bring that seed and plant it in front of the king's palace, then rain would come. But whoever went there ran the risk of never returning. Therefore, the king and his subjects considered it out of the question for anyone but the bravest young men to attempt this task. The king asked: "Who is ready to go?" No one came forward. Then the king announced that he would give half his kingdom to the one who brought the rainseed. Lured by this reward, some men went, but never returned.

Girish, who was a very courageous, adventurous, and intelligent boy, asked his mother's permission to go to the *rakshas* and bring back the rainseed. His mother granted him permission. Girish then went to the king and asked him for permission to go. The king laughed at him and said, "So many courageous men much older than you have tried, and they couldn't bring it. Some did not come back at all. You are so small, how do you hope to get it? Don't take the risk, go and play with your friends." Girish told the king that when he was a small child he put his hand into a snakes' pit and had also fought with tigers. He pleaded with the king to give him permission and to bless him so that he could be successful in his mission. Finally, the

STORY

The Girl who Brought Rainseed

A Kannada Folktale



king granted him permission. Girish went to the *rakshas* but did not return. Girija and her mother became very worried about Girish.

Though Girija was also very active and intelligent, her mother used to scold her all the time. Since she was a girl she was made to live under numerous restrictions: "Don't play with friends...", "Don't go outside...", "Help in the housework, that is enough for you." But when Girish didn't return home for so many days, Girija asked her mother if she could go and rescue her brother and bring back the rainseed. Her mother snubbed her: "How can you, being a girl, do the work which a boy could not do? Don't talk rubbish, just go and bring water from the pond outside the village." Girija felt very bad, but she quietly took the pot and went to fetch water.

On the way she met three women. Since she looked dull and sad, the women asked her what was the matter. Girija expressed her desire to go and bring the rainseed and her brother home. The three women laughed at her and said, "You are a girl! How can you win over that *rakshas* and bring back rainseed? Besides, girls cannot go to that place, so don't even think about such things, just fill your water pot and go back home."

Girija went home, delicately balancing the water pot on her head. When she reached her house, she stood outside the door and called her mother to come and help her with the pot. But her mother did not come. When Girija tried to take it down herself, her little hands could not manage its weight and the water pot crashed to the ground and broke. Girija became very scared that her mother would beat her for breaking the pot, so she ran right out of the village. There she met the three women again. They again asked her why she was looking so panicky. Girija told them the story and she again expressed her wish to bring the rainseed to save the village from drought and disaster. The women told her that if she had been a boy, she could have gone to find that seed. But since she was a girl, she should not even think of undertaking such a risky job. Girija felt very demoralised and wished she could become a boy. On seeing her so forlorn, the women said that they could transform her into a

boy. Girija was thrilled. By covering her head with a cloth, putting a shirt and pyjamas on her, and a stick in her hand — they turned her into a little boy.

Girija felt very happy. She began to climb the hill where the *rakshas* lived. On her way she met an old woman who pleaded with her: “I am feeling thirsty. Would you please bring me some water?” The boy in Girija told her, “I am going for some very important work. I don’t have time now. Let me go on with my work.” But as a girl, she thought, “Poor lady... she may be very thirsty, and there is no harm in stopping to bring her some water.” So she went to fetch water from the nearby pond, but when she came back the old lady was gone, so she

continued with her journey. Then she met a dog on her way. As a boy she lifted her stick to beat the dog, but as a girl she thought, “The dog has done me no wrong, so why should I beat it? Doesn’t it hurt the dog if I beat it?” Thinking that, she put down her stick. Suddenly, the dog disappeared.

When she went a little further, she finally came face to face with the *rakshas*. The *rakshas* bellowed at her: “Hey, little boy, why have you come here? What do you want?” Girija was afraid but she didn’t show it. She replied calmly, “I’ve come to take the rainseed.” The *rakshas* laughed at her impertinence. “You can’t get it so easily. You have to solve two puzzles before I will let you have the rainseed.”



Girija told the *rakshas* that she was ready to face any test. The *rakshas* said, “What is it that has a head but is not a human being?” And holding the hair on the top of his head, he said, “What is it that has a *jata* but is not a *rishi*, has three eyes but is not Shiv?” Girija didn’t take a minute to reply: “Coconut.” As soon as she answered the cloth on her head disappeared. Then the *rakshas* presented her with the second puzzle: “What is it that walks on three legs in the morning, on two legs in the afternoon, and three legs in the evening?” Thinking for a second, Girija said, “Human being.” Suddenly, her clothes changed into that of a girl. When the *rakshas* saw that a girl had emerged out of the boy’s disguise, he was amused. At that very

spot, a seed sprouted. Along with the seed appeared her brother, Girish. Girija was very happy. She gathered the seed and gave it to Girish, so he could be rewarded by the king. Then they both went back to the palace.

The king and the people were surprised and very happy. The king asked Girish to plant the rainseed in front of the palace. He dug up some earth and planted the seed. All the people waited for some time but the rain did not come. The three women who were also there said the rain would come only if the person who got the seed planted it. So Girija took the seed out of the ground and replanted it herself. Suddenly, the sky was covered with clouds and it began to rain. The king

was so happy that he asked Girija to take half his kingdom. Little Girija’s reply humbled the king: “What will I do with half your kingdom? I don’t want such a headache. It is enough if we have plenty of food, clothes and a house to live in.” The king ordered the minister to give Girija’s family whatever they asked for. So from then onwards, Girija and her family lived happily ever after. □

Sent by Hemlatha

