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Om Namo Bhagavade Sivanandaya

Sri Gurudev explains in Hindu Fasts and Festivals, how Lord Ganesha cursed the moon that no one should look at it on Ganesh Chaturthi day. Sri Gurudev goes on to say "If anyone does, he will surely earn a bad name, censure or ill-repute. However, if by mistake someone does happen to look at the moon on this day then the only way he could be freed from the curse would be by repeating or listening to the story of how Lord Krishna cleared His character regarding the Syamantaka jewel. This story is quoted in the *Bhagavatam*. Glory to Lord Genesha! How kind and merciful He is to His devotees!"

To inoculate ourselves from an accidental glance at the moon we will now read

THE STORY OF THE JEWEL SYAMANTAKA

Sri Suka said: Satrajit, who was the cause of bringing disrepute to Krishna, sought expiation for his offence by offering the jewel Syamantaka together with his daughter to Krishna.

Rajah Parakshit asked: O holy one! What harm did Satrajit do to Krishna?

Sri Suka said: The Sun-deity was pleased with his devotee Satrajit. Pleased with him, he presented him with the jewel Syamantaka. Wearing this jewel round his neck and shining like the Sun-deity himself, Satrajit entered Dwaraka, almost impossible to be distinguished from the brilliance around him.

People whose eyes were dazzled even from a distance at his sight, believed that the Sun-deity was coming, and reported the matter to the Lord, who was then playing dice. They said : 'O Narayana! O Thou who art armed with a conch, discus and mace! O Thou who wert tied to the mortar! O Thou the lotus-eyed ! O Thou the protector of Gokula! O Thou the joy of the Yadus! Salutations to Thee. 7. Here comes, to see Thee, O Lord of the worlds, that Surya of fierce brilliance, blinding the eyes of all onlookers with his aura of light rays. It is common for all the Divinities in the three worlds to seek Thee. Now it seems Surya is coming to see Thee, discovering that Thou art now hiding Thy identity as one among the Yadus.'

Sri Suka said: Hearing these words of the credulous people, the Lord smiled and said: `This is not the Sun-deity, but Satrajit shining with the lustre of the jewel he has acquired.' Satrajit now went to his own house that was kept well-decorated with all auspicious things for his reception. With the help of Brahmana priests, he had the jewel installed in the temple of the Sun, his favorite deity. O King! Where this jewel is kept and worshipped, it yields daily eight loads of gold. Besides, none of the causes of misery like poverty, contagious diseases, misfortunes, attack by serpents, thefts, worries etc., will prevail there.

Once Krishna requested Satrajit to hand over this jewel to the king of the Yadus. But in his greed for gold, the Yadava did not do so, unmindful of the evil consequences of rejecting the request. One day Prasena, the brother of Satrajit, went hunting, with that luminous jewel tied to his neck. In the forest a lion killed Prasena along with the horse he was riding. The lion, which went into the dense mountain taking the jewel with it, was attacked and killed by Jambavan, the Lord of the bears. Jambavan took possession of the jewel, returned to his cave, and gave it to his child to play with. Not finding his brother Prasena returning, Satrajit grew very anxious. He gave out that his brother, who went to the forest adorned with the jewel, must certainly have been killed by Krishna (in order to rob him of the jewel). This scandal travelled from ear to ear and spread everywhere. When it reached the ears of the Lord, he decided to clear himself of the disrepute arising from this

allegation, and accordingly started to trace the footsteps of Prasena, accompanied by a body of citizens. In the course of their search, they came across the dead body of Prasena and his horse, killed by the lion, and later they also saw on the mountain top the carcass of the lion slaughtered by the king of the bears.

Then they reached the cave of the bear, which was fearful and pitch dark within. The Lord entered it, keeping his followers outside. Then he saw the precious jewel set apart as a plaything for the child of the bear, and desiring to take it away, he approached the child. Seeing the strange form of a man approaching, the governess of the child cried out in fear, and roused to great anger by that cry, the powerful Jambavan came running. Jambavan, who did not know that his adversary was none but his Master (Rama now manifesting as Krishna), took him to be an ordinary man and fought with him in great anger, without understanding his greatness. Like two hawks struggling for a piece of flesh, there was a fierce duel between them using weapons, stones, and fists.

For twenty-eight days and nights without a break, they fought continuously hitting each other with their adamantine fists. With his joints dislocated by the blows of Krishna's fists, enfeebled, exhausted, and perspiring, Jambavan said to his adversary as follows in great astonishment. (Jambavan on knowing about the divinity of Krishna through introspection) `I know Thee to be the mover within all beings as the strength of their senses, heart, and body; as the all-pervading being and director of Prakriti; as one of unlimited prowess and the controller of everything. Thou art the Prime Mover, being the creator of the creator Brahma himself; Thou art the substantial cause too, because all materials of creation derive their substantiality from Thee; Thou art the soul of Time, the supreme power drawing everything into itself; Thou art the soul of souls in all beings; and Thou art the Supreme Being, the Lord of all divinities.Thou art He, whose slightly angry look made the ocean with all its giant creatures boil and yield passage; who built a bridge over it, a worthy monument to Thy glory; who caused Lanka to be burnt; and whose arrows struck down the heads of Rakshasas in large numbers.'

The Supreme Lord, born as the son of Devaki, now spoke to the lord of bears who came to recognise his identity. The lotus-eyed Lord, stroking the body of that devotee with his soothing hands, spoke to him in his loving and sonorous voice: `O King of bears! In order to clear us of the false and defaming charge brought against us in connection with the Syamantaka, we happened to come to this cave.'

On hearing this, Jambavan gave the jewel as also his daughter as an offering to Krishna. The men accompanying Krishna waited outside the cave for twelve days, but not finding Krishna coming out, returned home in grief. Hearing that Krishna did not come out of the cave, Devaki, Rukmini, Vasudeva and other friends and relatives felt deep sorrow. The sorrow-stricken inhabitants of Dwaraka began to curse Satrajit and began to pray to Durga, the mysterious Mother, for the return of Krishna. Soon after they had prayed to the Goddess, She responded, as it were, through the appearance of Krishna in their midst along with his new bride Jambavati. The return of Krishna was to all like the restoration of a dead man to life. Seeing him with his new wife and the Syamantaka adorning his neck, everyone rejoiced exceedingly. Krishna had Satrajit summoned to the king's assembly, and there gave him the Syamantaka, explaining how it was traced. With his head bending under a great sense of shame, he received the jewel and went home repenting for his misdeeds.

Grieving in mind for thoughtlessly quarrelling with a great man, Satrajit thought deeply how he could erase his guilt and win the favour of Krishna. He thought: `What should I do for my welfare? How can I stop people from cursing me, the short-sighted, mean and greedy man that I am? I shall give my daughter, a jewel among women together with the Syamantaka to

Krishna. This is the best way of reconciliation. There is none else.' Resolving thus within, he himself went with his daughter possessed of all virtuous qualities, as well as the jewel, and offered them to Krishna. The Lord then married, according to scriptural rites, that daughter of Satrajit, Satyabhama, who was possessed of various qualifications like nobility of nature, beauty, generosity and the like and for whom many high-positioned men were coming forward as suitors. The Lord said to Satrajit: `We shall not accept the jewel Syamantaka. It is best that it is kept with you who is a devotee of the Sun-deity.'

THUS ENDS THE STORY OF THE SYAMANTAKA JEWEL.

OM SHANTI SHANT SHANTI!!!