

Nothing is Useless

In olden times, boys used to go to "Gurukuls" and live there with the Guru for many years for their education. When the pupils had gathered the knowledge and wisdom they wanted, they went back home with the Guru's blessings and settled down in life.

Once, two pupils, who were to leave the Gurukul for home, went to their Guru and said, "Gurudev, please tell us what gift we may give you as our Guru dakshina?" The Guru was pleased with the pupils' love and gratitude. He too loved them because of their devotion, discipline and sense of duty. He expected nothing more from them. However, he decided to add a little more to his pupils' wisdom. So, he said to them "Dear children, go into the forest behind our Gurukul and bring me some dry leaves for which no one has any use."

The pupils wondered why their Guru had asked for this strange gift. But being quite obedient, they left for the forest as their Guru wanted them to do.

As soon as they entered the forest, they came near a small heap of dry leaves beneath a tree. When they were picking up some of them, an old farmer came running to them and said "Please put those leaves back into the heap. I have collected them. I am taking them to my field. When I burn them, the ashes will make excellent manure which will enable me to have a rich crop of food grains."

The pupils left that heap and went a little further into the forest. There, they saw three women collecting dry leaves and putting them into their baskets. "What do you do with these dry leaves?" asked the pupils. "Dear brothers" said one woman, "I use them as fuel to heat water for bath and for washing our clothes." The second one said, "We pin the better leaves together with reed-pins and make "patravalis" which are used as dinner plates in ashrams and temples. I earn some money thus to feed my children." Said the third one, "I collect dry leaves of this particular tree. My husband who is a "Vaidya" uses them for preparing some herbal medicines. He cures many ailments."

The pupils then went still further into the forest. They saw some dry leaves under a tall tree. As both were looking at them, a big bird swooped down and, picking up one leaf, flew away. The pupils watched the bird carrying the leaf to the top of a small tree nearby, where it was building a nest of dry leaves and grass. They did not wish to take away the dry leaves which were useful to the bird.

Both the boys decided to go back to the Gurukul. On the way they saw a small pond in which a big dry leaf was floating on the water. "There is a big dry leaf which is of no use to any one" said one of them. The pupils went to the pond and picked up the leaf. To their surprise, they saw two big red ants moving on it. As one of the pupils held the leaf in his hand, the ants stopped moving, as

though to say, " This dry leaf has been our life-boat. But for it, we would have got drowned in the pond."

The pupils, thereafter, gave up their vain pursuit and returned to the Gurukul. In a sad tone, they said to the Guru, "Gurudev, we found that even dry leaves have so many uses that we could not bring them to you. All the dry leaves we saw were being used for some purpose or the other. Please forgive us for not bringing with us the Guru Dakshina you had asked for."

"Dear children" replied the Guru, "I have received the Guru dakshina I wanted. The knowledge you have gathered today is my real Guru dakshina. Even a dry leaf is of great use and help to man, bird and insect. How much more precious, then, should man's body be when it is put to good use! So, take good care of your body and use it to make your life as well as the lives of others happy. Never miss a chance to use it to serve the needy, the sick and the aged or to help the ignorant and the poor. Never forget this great lesson you have learnt today."