

Significance



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By Naramsetti Umamaheswararao



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Once, while a bird was searching for food, it spotted a berry under a banyan tree. As the bird grabbed the berry with its beak and flew, it slipped and fell. The place where the berry landed was a field next to a village. On the same day the berry fell, a strong storm brought rain, causing the soil to cover the berry.

Two days later, the berry rotted, and the seeds inside began to talk to each other.

One seed happily said, “We are alive thanks to our luck! Otherwise, we would have been digested in the bird’s stomach within a week.”

Another seed replied, “That’s true. If we had gone into the bird’s stomach, we would have died. We wouldn’t even have had the chance to talk like this.” The other seeds nodded in agreement.

After two more days, one seed sprouted. The sprouting seed excitedly jumped and said, “Look, everyone! I’ve sprouted!”

Seeing the sprout, the other seeds warned, “Pull that sprout back! If you grow, you will change your form and rise above the ground. You will face many hardships while growing. Sometimes, humans might uproot you. Other times, animals might trample or eat you. You must overcome all this to grow into a plant. If you grow, you need sufficient water. If you don’t get enough water, you will wither and die. You cannot endure all these hardships, so it’s better to remain as we are and enjoy our time together.”

The sprouting seed listened but did not respond or pull back its sprout. After a few days, the banyan plant emerged from the soil and began to grow. Its stem grew straight, branches spread out, and many leaves sprouted. Years passed, and it grew into a large tree.

To escape the heat, farmers and travelers rested in the shade of the banyan tree. Animals found shelter beneath it during the night and when it rained. Birds built nests on its branches. The banyan tree provided refuge to many, making the area lively.

Occasionally, indigenous doctors came to the banyan tree to collect its bark, leaves, and buds for medicinal use. Children played in the field, swinging joyfully on swings hung on the banyan tree. The banyan tree felt happy.

Many years went by. One day, a terrifying storm struck. Strong winds blew, and it rained heavily. Many trees were uprooted by the storm, and the banyan tree was among them. The people were deeply saddened by the fall of the banyan tree. The birds and animals living in its branches mourned silently.

After a few days, when the greenery of the banyan tree faded, villagers used axes to cut its branches and trunk for firewood. Everyone who carried the wood remarked, “It was useful even after it died.”

Meanwhile, the remaining seeds in the ground, which had stayed behind selfishly, felt happy hearing their sibling’s praises but were also ashamed. One seed said, “We all made a grave mistake. We remained as we were and couldn’t help anyone. We didn’t do anything worthy of remembrance. Every life should have significance, but our life has been wasted.

Although we had a great opportunity to be born, we squandered it. Our sibling, however, did something good. Even in death, it lives on in the hearts and homes of people. Our sibling's legacy uncovered the true significance of life.”

Hearing this, another banyan seed replied, “Some people also live cowardly lives. They continue to make the same mistake we did. They waste their lives, not realising that a life dedicated to helping others brings true satisfaction. If we understand that helping others leads to everlasting fame and support one another, it would be much better.”

The banyan seeds lamented, “We cannot bring back what has passed, so this is all we have in this life.”



Banyan Berries: Fom
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Naramsetti Umamaheswararao has written more than a thousand stories, songs, and novels for children over 42 years. he has published 32 books. His

novel, *Anandalokam*, received the Central Sahitya Akademi Award for children's literature. He has received numerous awards and honours, including the Andhra Pradesh Government's Distinguished Telugu Language Award and the Pratibha Award from Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University. He established the Naramshetty Children's Literature Foundation and has been actively promoting children's literature as its president.

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