

The Real Enemy

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By Naramsetti Umamaheswara Rao



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Once there lived a farmer named Venkanna in Bhimavaram village. He had a grown-up son named Somu. But Somu was very lazy.

One day, Venkanna's relatives came. They said that they were going on a pilgrimage and invited them

along. Venkanna replied, “Our paddy field will be ruined, if we go away for a whole month now. The harvest should be cut and stacked.”

His relatives persuaded him by saying, “Let your son Somu take care of the work. He will also learn that way. If you both come along, we will see that you face no problems. You won’t get such good company again.” Venkanna agreed after thinking for a while. Overhearing this, Somu promised that he would handle the farm work. Venkanna and his wife left with their relatives.

As instructed, Somu went to the fields a couple of times in the beginning. Seeing the paddy, he thought, “The crop is not ripe yet. It needs ten more days.” So, he lazed and postponed the work. Eventually he stopped visiting the field altogether.

He was reminded twenty days later when his neighbouring farmers enquired why he hadn’t harvested the crop yet. It was already too late by then. He rushed to the field. But he couldn’t find workers immediately. He managed to bring some labourers after five more days. But the crop had become overripe and most of the grains had fallen to the ground.

Venkanna saw the field when he returned from the pilgrimage. He was heartbroken. “I should never have

trusted Somu. I shouldn't have gone," he moaned while scolding his son bitterly for his laziness.

Later, when there was a wedding in their family, Venkanna again had to leave. Before going, he told Somu, "There is a crop of groundnuts. Go and check every day. Guard the field so cattle don't graze on it. There's still some time before it needs to be harvested, so be careful."

Somu remembered his past mistake with the paddy. He wanted to do better this time and called the labourers in advance. He had the groundnut harvested early. He stacked the crop neatly, thinking his father would praise him.

Venkanna returned later and was shocked. The groundnuts were harvested before the seeds had matured. The grains were soft inside and not ready. Such a crop would fetch no price. Venkanna was distressed again. He scolded Somu. "I only face losses because of you. When will you learn?"

Somu replied stubbornly, "Even when I do the work, you're never satisfied. Then why should I work at all?" Their argument grew heated.

At that time, their schoolteacher, Mohan, happened to pass by. He stepped in hearing the quarrel and asked what had happened. Venkanna explained Somu's laziness and the losses it caused.

Then Mohan said, “Your son clearly doesn’t realise how dangerous laziness is. Let me talk to him.”

He said, turning to Somu, “Laziness is the root cause of failure. A lazy person can never achieve what he wants. The greatest enemy of a man is not someone outside, it is laziness itself.”

Somu replied honestly, “I want to give up laziness, but I am unable to. What should I do?”

Mohan smiled and said, “You must practice being active. I’ll give you an example. You’ve raised hens, haven’t you? Have you seen how a mother hen cares for her eggs?”

“No, I haven’t noticed,” said Somu.

Then Mohan explained, “The mother hen sits patiently on her eggs, waiting for the chick inside to peck its way out. Only when it hears the chick tapping from inside, does the hen carefully break the shell from outside to help it out. If she breaks it too early, the chick, which hasn’t fully formed, will die inside. This is exactly what happened with your groundnut harvest, you were too early.”

He continued, “But the hen also never delays once the chick is ready. She immediately helps it out or else the chick will die. That was your paddy mistake. You were too late. Do you understand now?”

Somu nodded realising. “Yes, I see my fault.”

Mohan concluded, “Just as the hen waits with care and patience, we too must show the same attention in our work. Whatever it is.... Farming or business. Responsibility and timing are important. Then only we will get results. If you are a student, careful planning and sincere effort will always lead to progress.” Somu slowly started working hard and thoughtfully from then on.

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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