

Once I was severely harmed. Admittedly, it was due to my own carelessness. Dread stymied even my reasoning capacity. I felt humiliated. It was related to a money deal. This episode triggered the poem.

VENOMOUS SNAKE

Edasseri

I am bitten by a snake, alas,
Though I harmed none at all,
Calamity! It stalked about the pathway
To jab me with its fangs.
Cruelty's dance, behold, hood full-blown,
Spitting poison, again and again!
In the terrible toxin it spurts
Dry mass around burns.
Into a vague darkness, my world
Is sinking at this time of noon
I drown, fatigue overpowers
Moment by moment, am blown to pieces.
I lose my grip and I slump;
My heart only for a while may pump.

Are my innards being eroded
By the dark toxin? It aches beyond endurance.

Oh, deadly snake, hood full-blown
You hiss, and bite me again and again!
Pour the deadly venom you spit,
Copiously as to slosh my veins.
May I perish, as you wish;
But why make me struggle in acute pain?
Probe deep with your fangs
And suck fast my dipping spirits
What a calamity, you venomous snake;
How could you do this to me?
You did not care to see my life;
Ripe and succulent,
Like the mid-slice of a jackfruit.
Honey oozes, sweet smell wafts,
Passion for life see no bounds.
You did not care about my little kids;
The wingless baby birds.
Who will nurture them to grow?
Deserving they are to the duty I owe.

Oh snake, to-day you prowled alas!

Intent to cheat, in my way!

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The truth, not discovered on earth,
Is now made bare by a speck of sand!
Futile is the long time spent,
Truth is revealed in a spur-of-the-moment.
As life in me weakens to low ebb
And shrinks into a tiny vial,
There rises a murmur, questions thrown back,
Which, ricochets the edge of the universe.
"Was not that serpent too, like you
Tasting the nectar of life, bit by bit?
Is not the acute concern for offspring
Working in it more than in you?
As its partner broods, coiled in bundle,
Over the dear eggs which it laid,
The male snake has not a moment's peace,
Afraid of enemies, seen unseen, on earth and sky;
Are you not touched, by its quivers,
Fearful and restless; during a moment of discovery
As dread stares ready to pounce?

It quenches its burning thirst, eternal
By the cool drops of abiding love,
And then it heaves a sigh of relief;
Is it any different from that of yours?"
In the consciousness remaining before black out
Some sights rewind, as in a mirror;
On the path seen like a border to the lawn
There appears a thin vine-like figure,
Moving tentatively in the sun
Like a silver lace.
How tender are the wings of moment,
Hardly have we the means to control!
As the figure is spotted, caution refrains,
But the foot stomp right on its back.
Insane fear worked in the snake
It crawled and coiled itself unseen.
It lay helpless listening
To the noise of searching people
Their foot- steps sounded,
Like the trumpet of death.

Oh, serpent, it is indeed pathetic;
You are now a tender worm
Your fiery venom is harmless
Like the drool from a baby's mouth!
I am now awake, my ears
Take in the sweet voices around.
The sea of fragrant saffron sun
Is dripping into my pair of eyes.
From the crowd suddenly
Someone said, 'nothing to worry'.

Futile is the long time spent,
Truth is revealed in a spur-of-the-moment.
"There is nothing to fear in this world
Except, of course, fear itself."

Vishappambu - Published in Mathrubhumi weekly, September 4, 1955.

A free translation by E. Madhavan

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