

Starvation, Labour and Dignity

By Chanan Singh B.A.

Towards the beginning of the last century, there lived in Lack-laughter Land a poor man, so poor he was, that often he found his family on the verge of starvation. One day there was no food in the house and his twelve year old son, Shanu asked his mother for meals. Tears welled up in the mother's eyes and both burst into sobs. This pathetic sight was too much for the poor man and he steeled his mind to make an exit from this 'Sorry Scheme of Things'. He was no coward to commit suicide, so he joined the Army and volunteered for the front as a very violent battle was being fought between his country and a neighbouring nation. After about a month he fell in action leaving Shanu an orphan.

Shanu received no patrimony except starvation, hunger and tears and was left to shift for himself. He had no wherewithals to continue his schooling. But he was a highly intelligent and dynamic lad. His teachers liked him very much and the Headmaster of the school remitted his tuition fee and also helped him with some money to buy his books. The problem of his education was, for the time being, being solved but the problem of keeping wolf from the door still stared him in the face. After his school hours and on Sundays, he worked on the farms of his neighbours and thus earned his bread. At times when he had no money, he had to go without food. Often at night when he was poring over his books, his oil ran out and he had to go out into the street and benefit by the street light. After three years of incessant toil, physical and mental, he appeared in the matriculation examination and won scholarship, but this money was not sufficient to enable him to get university education.. Much reluctantly he had to shelve the idea of higher education.

He got an appointment in a legal practitioner's office but he always devoted all available time to his studies. After four years of service, he had some money and he also got a little bit in inheritance from an aunt who died issueless. He left his job, returned to the university and qualified himself for the legal profession.

He began his legal practice and by dint of his capacity for labour and rare intelligence which God had bestowed on him, he soon came to the forefront in legal circles. His name came to be known through the length and breadth of the country and all the important cases flowed to him and soon he was a rich man.

But did the possession of this filthy lucre turn Shanu's head? No, he never forgot the days of his boyhood and lived a life of self-renunciation. At the sight of suffering, Shanu's heart melted. He never grudged his money to alleviate the sufferings of the poor. He opened schools, hospitals, orphanages and charity houses. His service in the social field was very much appreciated by the Government and he was knighted by the queen.