

BA'BA' IN THE EYES OF HIS MOTHER

Many people kept telling me that my son was God. I laughed at them. My little Bubu, God? And yet...

One day, one of the monks who used to attend to Him, taught me a mantra to repeat during my puja time. As I didn't use it every day, I forgot it. When Dada, the monk, asked me about my puja, I had to confess that I had forgotten the mantra.

Dada went away. I suppose he met with my Bubu. When he came back he told me the mantra again.

The next day I was doing puja in my puja room. Bubu had gone to work in the railway office in the morning and was not expected back until evening. As usual, I lit incense and decorated Lord Visnu's image with auspicious red powder, sandal-paste and freshly gathered flowers. I worshipped my Lord, surrendering my mind unto the Supreme through devotional prayer. During the puja I began to repeat my newly re-acquired mantra. Then a curious thing happened.

While repeating the mantra, I became aware of another presence in the room. My concentration was distracted from the altar, and I turned to see Bubu standing behind me.

I was startled. "Bubu," I cried, "Why have you returned so early? Are you hungry?" He did not reply. My Bubu is a little absent-minded at times, so I did not really pay heed to his silence. Yes, absent-minded, or, should I say, other-worldly-minded, simple and pure-hearted. I remember the time I sent him to the market to buy vegetables. He returned to proudly tell me how he had struck a good deal with the shop woman. He had bargained the price of the vegetables down from 2.5 rupees a kilo, to 2.0 rupees a kilo. When I asked him then for the change of the 10 rupee note I had entrusted him with, he confessed that he had no change, because the shop woman had seemed so poor that he had not been able to accept the eight rupees change from her. Ah! That is my Bubu.

I hurried out of the puja room. Dada had arrived in order to carry Bubu's lunch to him at work. "No need for you take the trouble," I exclaimed. "Bubu

is here."

"Where?" Dada asked.

"Here, in the puja room. I suppose he felt hungry and came home early."

Dada entered the puja room, but he couldn't find Bubu in there. "Are you sure you saw him?" he asked me.

I looked a second time and was surprised to find the room empty.

The following day, exactly the same thing happened. And the day after that, the same. I was getting a little annoyed at Bubu by then. Jokes are OK to a point, but his mysterious appearances and disappearances were distracting me from concentrating during puja, and I felt annoyed at him for that. I decided that I would have to outwit him.

The next day, before starting my puja, I locked all the doors and windows of the house. I also closed the door of the puja room to make doubly certain that he could not come in. I prostrated before the image of my Lord Visnu, and began my prayers. After some minutes I became absorbed, and in that absorption the mantra arose in my mind and my prayers merged into its rhythmic strains.

When my consciousness became aware of the room again and I opened my eyes, Bubu was there, before me.

I accepted his presence.

Some months later I requested Dada to help me to carry the image of my Lord Visnu to the river. I submerged it, for, Bubu was there.