

THE ANT PRAYS FOR RAINS

Once there was a big famine in Palestine. It was during the time of Hazrat Suleiman, the Prophet King Solomon. He came out with his people and proceeded to an open place in the desert to pray for the rains to come. Suddenly, he saw an ant standing on its two legs, raising its hands up towards the sky and saying, "Oh Allah! We are but very small among your creatures. We cannot survive without your grace. Please bestow upon us your sustenance and do not punish us because of the sins of bad human-beings. Please send down the rains so that trees can grow, farms become green and grains become available and we have our food to eat."

Hazrat Sulaiman knew the language of all animals. He told his people, "Let us go home. The prayer of this ant is enough." It then rained heavily and all the land became green and productive.

The ant is an intelligent creature. During warm days, it collects and stores grains inside the holes. It knows that during wet and cold months it would not be able to go out to search for food. For fear that the grain go bad because of wetness, it splits it into two or more pieces. At times, during moonlit nights, it brings the split grains out of the stores for drying and preservation against decay.

The holes under the ground are made very carefully and covered with shelters to prevent the rain water from getting inside the holes. The ant, unlike other animals, can lift a burden twice its own weight. It is a greedy Animal which tends to store food for years to come although it normally lives for only a year. But at the same time it is not a selfish creature. When an ant finds some store of food grains, it runs up to its group and takes its fellow-ants to that place. It shows everyone of them its own find of the store. They always behave in this manner. Lakhs of them feed on the earnings of a single individual.

This shows how the ant works for the group and how each of them fulfils the needs and livelihood of its fellow-beings. How shameful it is for that man, who has no regard for another man; who has no concern for his fellow human beings who could be starving because of want of food.

Once, while Hazrat Sulaiman was traveling together with hosts of men, jinn and birds, they reached a valley of ants. It is related that the valley contained huge deposits of valuable metals like gold, silver and other precious stones.

Allah had secured the place by inhabiting it with large numbers of very unusual kinds of ants. No one could approach the valley on foot, not even by riding any animals. The ants are said to have been of extraordinary size.

When the chief of these ants witnessed the pomp and the glory with which Hazrat Suleiman and his companions were approaching towards it, it sounded an aerial caution to all the ants to get into their holes, lest they go trampled and crushed unknowingly by approaching men and jinn. Hazrat Suleiman smiled at this warning sounded by the ant's chief, and ordered his companions to wait till the ants went inside their holes. "None of us should hurt any ant while passing over their land", he said.

It is said that Hazrat Sulaiman addressed the chief of the ants and said: "How could my people hurt you or your fellow ants when they are floating through air. Don't you know I am a messenger of God. And would never act unfairly?" The chief of the ants replied: "O messenger of God. My cautioning the ants was not for any hurt that would suffer but to prevent them getting astray and forgetting the glory of God after seeing your pomp and show."

There is a deep meaning in this event. It shows that even the most humble and smallest of creatures has been endowed with the necessary wisdom to live safely and avoid being hurt as far as possible. It also shows, how even a small ant, does have the natural understanding of the true position of Allah when one experiences a great power and dignity of any creature in this world.

Thus an ant is one of the most wonderful small creatures in this world. Sura NAML (The Ant) in the Holy Quran is a chapter named after this creature. Over 1300 years ago, Hazrat Ali a.s was giving a sermon in Kufa, in which he was describing the beauties of creation in various forms of life. He was referring to small creatures and asking man to study how God made them so small yet so sturdy and strong. Hazrat described the ant in these words:

"Look at an ant. How tiny is its body and how delicate are its features! It is such a small creature that it often escapes the eye. And few people care to attach any importance to it among the living beings found on this earth. Look at it and study its ways of life; how it crawls, how it attacks its food, how it lifts a grain so many times heavier than its body, carries it to its hole; how it stores grains; and how in summer, it gathers and stocks food for winter and rainy days."

