

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN ARABIAN STEED.

From: Stories, Parables and Fables of life of P. Ribes, s.j.

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Intent of the Story

- ✓ *We are called to serve God and others wherever God placed you.*
- ✓ *God tells our vocation through the circumstances of our life*
- ✓ *What do we mean by “better prospects”; more luxuries in life, or greater service of God and neighbor?*
- ✓ *To serve God and neighbor we have to be ready to surrender everything we are and have.*

The Fable.

My name is Brawny and my brother’s name Sparky. Many years ago, we were born on a desert soil. We were graceful, beautiful and attractive ponies. In due time, we grew to be legant, sturdy and pure breed Arabian steeds. One and all admired our stateliness, the luster of our skin, the comeliness and gracefulness of our legs, the speed and gentility of our galloping.

To our bad fortune, we had been born in a poor desert land. True enough, people admired us, praised our beauty, but in a desert country, we could not show our prowess, nor display all our abilities. How could we run on a sandy ground? The heat of the desert was burning our smooth and furry skins. There was no crystal water to drink, or green and luscious grass to eat. We were too delicate to carry heavy loads on our backs as some interior beats of burden did. It was clear to us that we had been born in the wrong place. Our motherland could not give us all we wanted, all we were longing for. We were misfits!

One day, my brother confided in me and said: “I am not prepared to remain in this land forever. For better prospects, I want to migrate to richer and better countries. I want to enjoy life, I want to eat fresh grass and drink cool-clean water. I want admirers. I have decided to get away from here and to go where people will have use of me. I want to get the best possible trainers and run in the world’s best racecourses. There, they will treat me with dignity; I will be given a comfortable shelter. There, at the races, I will gain fame, popularity and the applause of the crowds. My name will appear in the front pages of the newspapers and sport magazines.

And so, in due time, this is what my twin brother did. To his good luck and to my chagrin, some rich merchants from the First World came to our desert, offered a handsome money to our master and walked away with Sparky. That night I cried a lot. I envied his good stars. For a long time, I kept waiting for some rich men to appear and free me from my misery. By hook or by crook, I wanted to get away and join the glamour of the affluent world!

One day, however, I do not know how and why, some strange thoughts started creeping in my mind. It was sort of a strange, unfamiliar voice within telling me: “Brawny, why do you feel

so sad? What are you fretting about? If God had wanted you to live and thrive in the racecourses of the wealthy, why did he not make you be born there? Take it for sure; if God wanted you to be born in this poor desert land, he will have some plans for you. Just pray and wait. He will show you the way! “And so, I prayed and prayed and prayed to God to show me his plans for me. I begged of him to make me see the purpose of my life here in this desert land and asked him to give me the courage to accept it.

One day while at prayer, I heard, within me, the voice of God. He whispered: “Brawny, do you really want to carry out my plans for you? Do you sincerely wish to serve me and be of use to the people of the land of your birth?” Abstractedly, I replied: “Yes, Yes, Lord. I do” In that case” God’s voice went on, “you have to be ready to sacrifice all that you are and the best you have. Are you willing?” Fearfully, I replied: “Yes, Lord, I am.”

“Well then”, the Lord carried on, “you will have to sacrifice your beauty and your pride. For the sake of my people, and of your people, you will become ugly, clumsy, slouching and uncouth!”

For a while I was taken aback. Stunned, I replied: “But, Lord, can I not serve you and my people keeping my gracefulness and beauty? Why should I surrender the best I have? Why should I become ugly, uncouth and slouching?” God’s voice sweetly, but firmly retorted: “Brawny, if you are not ready to surrender your beauty and your pride, I have no use of you! You won’t ever be of use to my people and to your people”.

There was a heavy silence in the air, the sun hid behind a treetop, the wind stood still.... My heart was beating to the point of bursting. Then, with trepidation and with moistened eyes, in a whisper, I said: “Lord, then, do as you wish. I am prepared. Go ahead!

”Soon, in quick succession, God sheared my proud brawny mane. I cried! Then he changed my graceful hoots into sort of clumsy broad feet, my slim well-shaped legs turned longer and crooked. When I saw what was happening, my heart bled and I cried aloud: “Master, enough! Enough! Stop it, Lord!” But his reply came swiftly: “Brawny, if you do not allow me to make you what I want you to be, I have no use of you”.

Again, there was a long and ponderous silence. Hot tears burned my cheeks. Then, in a fit of generosity, I closed my eyes and said: “Lord, do as you please, go on.” Soon after that, my big black sparkling eyes became small and dull, my cheeks and face disfigured, my neck was lengthened, and my lustrous skin became hard and ragged, the frame of my body bulky and contorted, my ears shrunk.

At last, with a voice full of joy, my Master said: “Now, my dearest Brawny, you can serve me and the people of your land of birth. You will be their most faithful and devoted friend. I made you a camel. You will carry them on your back across the desert, you will give them protection and security.

And I began my task. I worked hard for my people. I carried them on my back through dry and weary wastes. I transported their burdens across the desert. I lived with them day and

night. I became their best friend and they became my best companions. They loved me and I loved them.

One day as we reached an oasis, I saw my reflection on a pond of crystal water; then only, I came to see myself in all my ugliness, clumsiness and uncouthness. Yet, from the depth of my heart I said to my Master: “Lord, I thank you for making me a camel. I am so happy. Now, I feel proud of serving you and of being of great service to my brothers and sisters in my native land

SOME POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Who, according to you, was more successful in his life: Brawny or Sparky? Why?
2. Which of the brothers do you think experienced greater joy and satisfaction in life,: Brawny or Sparky? Why?
3. Can we take the circumstances of our birth, family, country, education, etc. as messages of God telling us what does he would like us to do with our lives? How? Why?
4. Is it Christ-like to migrate elsewhere and leave behind our birthplace “just to be able to have a higher standard of living and enjoy greater luxuries, wealth and comforts? Why?
5. What does our craving to get away from a hard or unrewarding situation, God has placed us in, tell us of our values and goals in life.
6. If the main purpose of our life is to serve others, will it be proper and right to use our talents only for our material prosperity? Why
7. When people migrate to wealthier countries for “Better Prospects” what do they mean? “Better Prospects” to help others in need, or rather, better Prospects to help themselves? Are those the “Better Prospects” wanted by God?
8. In connection with the land of our birth, do you agree with the words of a well-known song: “**Happiness is where we are and where we are supposed to be**”? Explain.
9. What are the attitudes of mind and heart necessary to serve the people of the country of our birth? Explain.
10. **What is more Christ-like: To be a “Beautiful Racer Horse” in a foreign country or an “Ugly Camel” in the country of our birth? Why?**

IDEAS FOR AN INPUT

- God speaks to us through the events of life, even the smallest and most “insignificant” ones.
- If God made me to be born in a certain country and place and in some particular circumstances, he surely had a plan for me.
- We need not run away from our situation in order to serve God, but rather, find out what God wants us to do in the here and now of our lives.
- If our goal in life is to work for others, to alleviate suffering, help the needs and fight for justice, India might be “the ideal place” for us. Nowhere in the world, we may find “better prospects”.
- **If the only goal in life for me is to make money, to enjoy material security, to have luxuries and roll in comforts, then, of course, migrating to wealthier countries might be “better” for me. But, is this, what I was born for?**

- As Christians, what did Jesus call us to? To easy success? To fame and popularity? To wealth? Or to service?
- Christ tells us, his disciples: If you wish to follow me:
 - ✓ Take up your cross daily and follow me!
 - ✓ If you want to save your life, you will lose it
 - ✓ If you want to be the first, be the last
 - ✓ If you want to be the master, become the slave
 - ✓ If I, your Master, washed your feet, you too should wash each other's feet.
- Can you imagine Jesus migrating from Palestine (a poor country) to Rome or Athens for better prospects, to become rich, famous and enjoy a comfortable life! Then, we, his disciples what should we do?
- If we wish to serve our people, like Brawny, we have to be willing to sacrifice many of our "talents" and "opportunities"; even shedding our comeliness and beauty. We have to be ready to become Camels. Are we?
- It's better to be a Camel in the service of our needy and deserving brothers and sisters in India, than to be an elegant, sturdy Arabian steed abroad serving the wealthy.
- We need God's grace and largeness of heart to stay put in India to serve those among whom God made us be born.

SOME POINTS FOR PERSONAL SHARING AND REFLECTION

1. Have you ever dreamt of migrating abroad for better" pastures", better prospects? What were you thinking of?
2. Did you ever feel envious hearing that some companions of yours who migrated abroad are doing very "well" now? What does this tell of your values and ideals?
3. Have you ever thought that God might have a plan for you in the land of your birth? What can that plan be?
4. Have you ever reflected on what sacrifices God may ask from you, in case you decide to be a Brownie in your own country? Are you ready to pay the price
5. Being honest to God and to yourself, are you happy that God made you be born
 - in India,
 - in the family you have
 - and in the circumstance he placed you in?
6. Are you in love with India? I mean, not its geography, nor its fauna and flora, nor its history and archeology but with the people of india, made to God's image and likeness? How do you show it? Are you ready to be a Camel for their sake? How?