

Generous to a Fault

and Other Stories from the Indian Heartland

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Generous to a Fault

Once upon a time, in ancient Andhra, there lived a man called Sankara Shastri. Though he was not a wealthy man, Shankara Shastri was unselfish by nature. He was willing to share whatever he had with anyone who asked. Many people took advantage of this and cheated the poor man. His wife, Parvati, did not approve of her husband's mindless generosity. But she had no choice but to accept his ways.

As time went by, bit by bit, the couple's modest savings ran out. They began to find it difficult to have even one square meal a day.

One morning, Sankara Shastri returned after a stroll through the village. "My dear," he grandly announced to his wife, "I just met a man who told me that he hadn't eaten for a week. I have invited him for lunch. Prepare a feast."

So saying, he went away into his room.

Parvati was furious. There was absolutely nothing in the house even for a simple meal. How on earth was she to cook up a feast? The man was crazy!

Parvati was a smart woman. She decided to put an end to her husband's madness then and there. She thought for a while and came up with a plan.

Soon, it was lunchtime and the guest arrived. Parvati took a look at his bulging tummy. She knew that his story of not having eaten for a week was false. But she kept quiet as her husband escorted the guest in. Sankara Shastri made sure the guest was comfortable. Then he went away for a quick wash.

