



The Devotion of Ravidas

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॥ श्रद्धा की शक्ति, भक्ति की विजय ॥



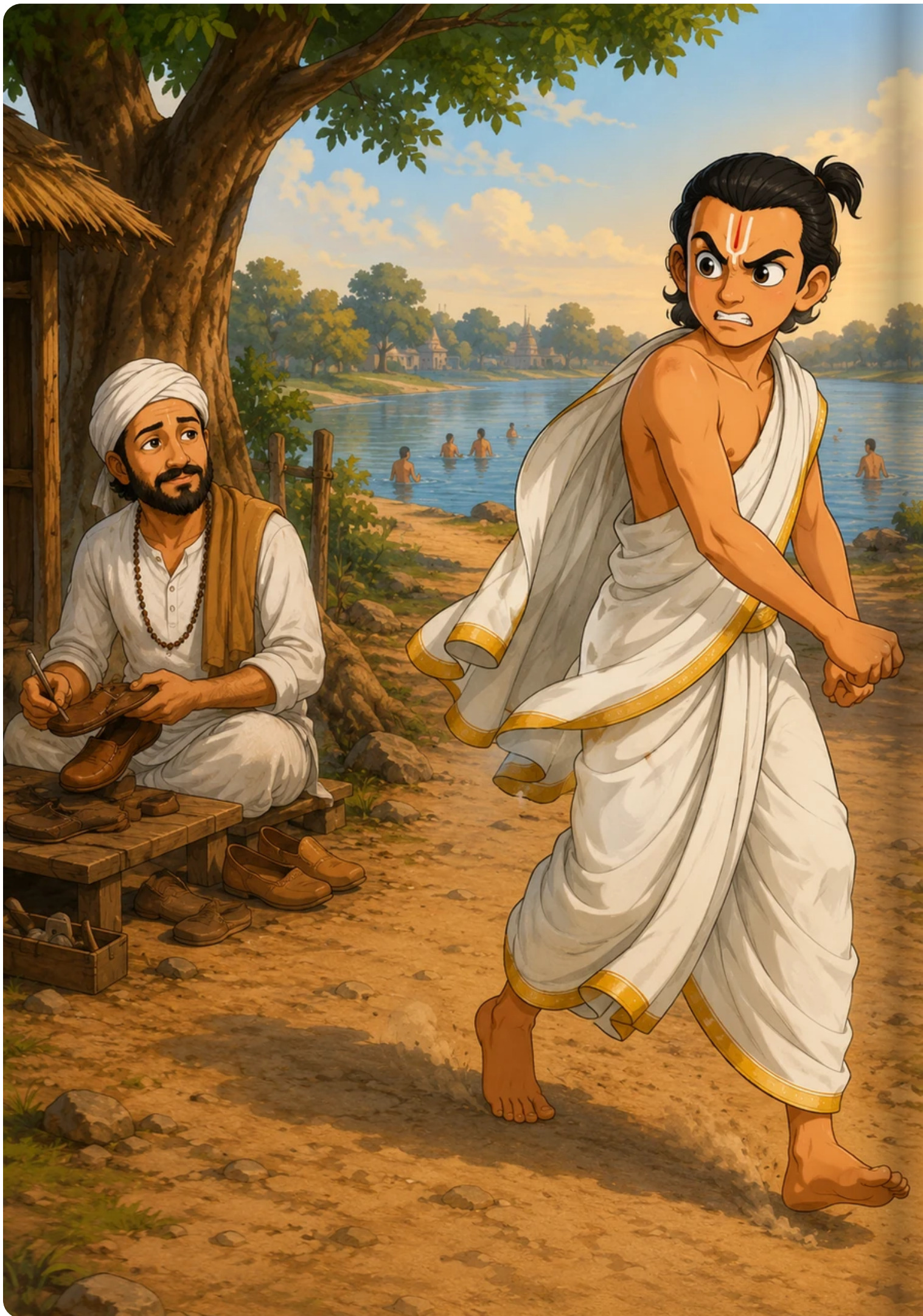
In the ancient, bustling city of Kashi, a humble cobbler named Ravidas lived a life of quiet prayer. While his hands worked skillfully with leather to make shoes, his mind was always focused on the divine, chanting sacred names with every stitch he made.



A learned Pundit, hearing of Ravidas's fame, came to visit the saint's modest hut. He was surprised to see a celebrated holy man sitting on the dusty ground, surrounded by scraps of leather and simple tools, deeply absorbed in his daily labor.



During their conversation, the Pundit asked Raidas how many times he had bathed in the nearby holy river Ganges. Raidas looked up calmly and admitted that he had never once taken a dip in the river, as he found God right there in his honest work.



The Pundit became very angry, believing that Raidas was a non-believer for staying away from the sacred waters. He felt that even talking to the cobbler had made him impure, so he stormed off toward the riverbank to wash himself and cleanse his soul.



As the Pundit hurried away, Raidas called out to him and offered a single betel nut as a humble gift for Mother Ganga. The Pundit took the small nut with a sneer, thinking it was a trivial and unworthy offering for a powerful goddess.



After finishing his prayers at the river, the Pundit tossed the betel nut into the flowing water. To his utter shock, a beautiful, divine hand rose out of the waves and caught the nut before it could sink, accepting the humble gift with grace.



Before the Pundit could move, another hand emerged from the Ganges holding a spectacular golden bangle encrusted with shimmering jewels. A voice from the heavens told the Pundit that this was a gift from Mother Ganga specifically for her true devotee, Raidas.



Tempted by the treasure, the Pundit kept the bangle and gave it to the King of Kashi to gain favor. The Queen was so delighted by the jewelry that she demanded a second matching bangle, threatening the Pundit with punishment if he did not find one.



Fearing for his life, the Pundit ran back to Raidas and confessed his greed and his mistake. He wept at the cobbler's feet, realizing that he had underestimated the power of a pure heart and the true meaning of devotion.



Raidas smiled and reached into the small wooden tub of water he used to soften leather for his shoes. From the murky water, he miraculously pulled out an identical golden bangle, showing the Pundit that the holy Ganges is present wherever there is a clean and faithful heart.