

How Raja Rasâlu Journeyed To The City Of King Sarkap

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Indian

*Intermediate
3 min read*

Now, after he had reigned a while in Hodinagari, Rasâlu gave up his kingdom, and started off to play chaupur with King Sarkap. And as he journeyed there came a fierce storm of thunder and lightning, so that he sought shelter, and found none save an old graveyard, where a headless corpse lay upon the ground. So lonesome was it that even the corpse seemed company, and Rasâlu, sitting down beside it, said—

‘There is no one here, nor far nor near,
Save this breathless corpse so cold and grim;
Would God he might come to life again,
‘Twould be less lonely to talk to him.’

And immediately the headless corpse arose and sat beside Raja Rasâlu. And he, nothing astonished, said to it—

‘The storm beats fierce and loud,
The clouds rise thick in the west;
What ails thy grave and thy shroud,
O corpse, that thou canst not rest?’
Then the headless corpse replied—

'On earth I was even as thou,
My turban awry like a king,
My head with the highest, I trow,
Having my fun and my fling,
Fighting my foes like a brave,
Living my life with a swing.
And, now I am dead,
Sins, heavy as lead,
Will give me no rest in my grave!'

So the night passed on, dark and dreary, while Rasâlu sat in the graveyard and talked to the headless corpse. Now when morning broke and Rasâlu said he must continue his journey, the headless corpse asked him whither he was going; and when he said, 'to play chaupur with King Sarkap,' the corpse begged him to give up the idea, saying, 'I am King Sarkap's brother, and I know his ways. Every day, before breakfast, he cuts off the heads of two or three men, just to amuse himself. One day no one else was at hand, so he cut off mine, and he will surely cut off yours on some pretence or another. However, if you are determined to go and play chaupur with him, take some of the bones from this graveyard, and make your dice out of them, and then the enchanted dice with which my brother plays will lose their virtue. Otherwise he will always win.'

So Rasâlu took some of the bones lying about, and fashioned them into dice, and these he put into his pocket. Then, bidding adieu to the headless corpse, he went on his way to play chaupur with the King.

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