

Zeus, Almighty!

By Veda Eswarappa

“Zeus, Almighty! Please lend thine ears to me.
Gatherer of clouds, I pray to you now
With hopes that you shall help render justice,
For I have been wronged, and revenge I avow”

With head uplifted and hands cupped by mouth,
He cried these things aloud to the pale sky.
Then a silhouette formed at the cave’s mouth
And the figure stepped forward asking, “Why?”

Why dost thou call and seek my assistance
With such suffering, as never before?
You only called out so when fighting gods,
And surely then my help was needed more?”

“Oh, king of the gods, I am very glad
That you answered my prayers without delay.
I know that you are a fair and just god.
So, wise one, I beg you hear what I say.”

“Polyphemus,” replied the form of Zeus,
“First, there is something I wish you tell me:
As you are in fact son of Poseidon,
Why not appeal to the Lord of the Sea?”

To this the Kyklops smiled and responded,
“Oh god of lightning, though that may be true,
There is, nor will there ever be, a god
Nearly as potent and wondrous as you!”

Hearing this praise, Zeus secretly rejoiced
And with great pride his heart started to swell,
Hence he said, “Polyphemus, dear nephew,
Please continue with what you wished to tell.”

“Well, almighty Zeus, the whole thing began
Yesterday, when I spotted, on the sand,
Six battered ships, two nearly halved, gushing
Hundreds of men, eager to ravish my land.

“Thinking the travelers must be weary,
I cordially walked down to their ships.
They were swarming into my cave just as
An invitation fell down from my lips.

“I presumed their stores of food to be low,
 And, of course, offered the best of my own,
 But they insisted we use their own meat,
 Though it tasted like nothing I had ever known.

“After all the feasting and drinking was done,
 I arranged for them to be entertained,
 But in spite of all the festivities,
 There was one man, Odysseus, who abstained.

“So I went to this man and said to him,
 ‘Stranger, I took you in and gave you food.
 Speak: why are you not enjoying yourself?
 Are you not pleased or just not in the mood?’

“This muscular man hunched over a bit
 And made his hulking frame look quite awkward.
 He looked as though he had something to say,
 And he motioned for me to lean forward.

“A poor beggar child with some stolen meat
 Tries to hide his theft and to appear small.
 His eyes will dart distrustfully around;
 So looked this man cowering by the wall.

“But when I bent down my ear to his mouth
 And said he could tell me of his woes, then
 He revealed to me a disgusting truth:
 The meat we feasted on had been his men!

“I was shocked and repulsed by the news, and
 My mind was reeling from the horror still
 When three men came from behind a rock
 And each slashed his sword through my one pupil.

“I desperately grabbed, searching for the men,
 But was greatly hindered by being blind.
 They muffled my anguished cries with sheep’s wool
 And bound me with rope, limbs all intertwined.

“But before they bound and gagged me this way,
 I said I would seek justice through you, God,
 But they retorted oh-so-haughtily
 That it’d be useless since you were a fraud.

“Before they left, they stole all my good things,
 Including my wines, cheeses, goats and wool.
 They pillaged my lands and ruined my goods
 Hoarding everything ‘til all boats were full.

“Odysseus had the audacity, Zeus,
 To curse you as soon as he left my cave,
 Not believing in the gods’ great powers.
 But at sea they could crush him with one wave.

“I could hear the men as they left on their ships
 And Odysseus shouted back to me,
 ‘When I return to Ithaka, I shall
 Build a temple devoted just to me.

““With gold and jewels I shall make it teem
 All representative of my glory.
 After all, I am much more powerful,
 So why should I submit to their decree?””

Now Zeus became utterly mortified,
 Thundering, “What of himself does he think?
 He used to seem a very pious man,
 But now his ship I have a mind to sink!

“Well, Polyphemus, I see why you called.
 I am glad you summoned me to say this.
 Make no mistake; I shall soon put an end
 To Odysseus’ s unwarranted bliss.”

With that, the summoner of clouds went off,
 Speeding towards the great Mount Olympus,
 Where the god prepared his plan to punish
 That man and fix what had gone so amiss.

Zeus conjured a cruel, fitting punishment
 In which the man should suffer and die, indeed.
 But before he could execute the plan,
 Zeus’s wise grey-eyed daughter intervened.

Athena told Zeus the truth about the man,
 She said what Odysseus had done and why,
 But this enraged the god Zeus even more,
 Because Polyphemus had told him a lie.

The man had conducted himself quite well,
 And the gods Odysseus surely feared.
 So Zeus set out to punish the Kyklops,
 While the life of Odysseus was spared.