



Learn English Through Stories

Panchtantra Tales

**Adopted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

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1. Singing Donkey



Once upon a time in a small village lived a kind washerman with his donkey. The washerman used to wash clothes in the morning and carry them on the donkey's back in the evening. During the night, the washerman used to set the donkey free so that he could eat grass from the field nearby. The donkey was very loyal; even after getting free, he used to eat till his stomach was full and return back to the washerman before sunrise.

Sometimes the donkey used to travel to the far fields to sneak into others' farms and eat their fruits, vegetables, and other crops.

One day, while grazing, the donkey saw a jackal in the fields. They both became friends instantly and began spending time together. They both used to meet during the night and wander into fields till sunrise. While the donkey used to graze green grass, the jackal hunted for small prey. Both of them became best friends, they used to do mischief together. One night the jackal told the donkey that he saw a field full of fresh and juicy vegetables, and yellow corns near the village end. The jackal said, "I am sure the farm has enough corns to satisfy your hunger for days, and I could even find some good prey — maybe a small hare."



A corn field

Both of them agreed to the plan and went to the farm at the end of the village. The donkey saw the farm full of corns and jumped with joy. The donkey didn't waste any time and began feasting on the corns. The jackal also began looking for something to eat. After a few hours, both of them were satisfied and their

stomachs were full. They decided to rest for a little while before going back home.

The weather was very pleasant, the cold breeze blew and the full moon shone brightly in the sky. The donkey said, "My friend I am very happy today all because of you, see the moon is also shining so brightly today. I feel like singing my heart out now."

Jackal said, "I've seen a donkey braying, a horse neighing, and somebody whickering and nickering, but never heard a donkey singing."

"A pretty young girl lives next door to my master's house, and she sings beautifully. I'm sure I can sing as well as she or even better," said Donkey.

The jackal replied, "No, my friend, not now! The farmer will wake up, and we will be in big trouble."

The donkey annoyingly replied, "What do you know about singing, you are a mere wild animal. You know nothing else than hunting and food."

The jackal realised that the donkey was not going to listen and was committed to singing a song. The jackal thought smartly and said, "Fine, if you really want, you can sing as much as you want. But before that let me find a safe place to keep an eye on the farmer." The donkey happily agreed and the jackal ran into thick grass to hide. The donkey took a deep breath and began singing out loud. His voice was so loud and harsh that it made the farmers awake. The farmer ran out on the farm with stones and sticks. As it was a full moon, he could easily spot the donkey. The farmer caught the donkey and gave him a good thrashing.

The donkey was beaten so badly that he turned black and blue. As the donkey escaped the field somehow, the jackal came out and began laughing. The jackal laughed and said, "Wow! What a nice song, looks like you also got a reward for it." The donkey cried in pain and both of them went back home.

Moral: Everything has a time and place, just think before you act.

2. Bad Company



Once, there lived a farmer named Bhagta. He was a poor man and never went to school. He could count up to twenty; otherwise, he was completely illiterate. Bhagta got married when he was only seventeen. His wife, Rano, was also uneducated. They had two children to look after and only had three acre of land. They were trying hard to save money and wanted to send their children to school. They worked hard on their fields and grew many crops: wheat, corn, barley, potatoes, etc.

One day, Bhagta became very sad because some mean crows would come and eat up his crops every day. He tried putting up scarecrows in the field, but they would tear the scarecrows apart.

One day, Bhagta laid a net trap in the field. He scattered grains over the net, the crows got caught. The crows pleaded for mercy' but Bhagta was in no mood to spare them. He said, "I won't leave any of you alive."

Suddenly, he heard a pitiable cry. He looked carefully at the net and found that a pigeon too was trapped along with the crows. Bhagta said to the pigeon, "What were you doing in the company of these evil crows? Now, you too will die because you were in bad company."

And then the crows and the pigeon became dinner for his dog named Moti. It's true. Bad company always brings harm.

Moral: Loneliness is better than bad company.

3. The Dog Who Went Abroad



Chitranga was a dog, who lived in a certain town which was affected by a famine.

People had no food to eat, and they cared not to give any to the dogs or cattle or any animal. Due to lack of food, along with other animals, the dogs were starving. Some of them even died.

Chitranga was not able to bear the hunger and realizing that the place did not offer conditions to live, he decided to leave for a foreign land in search of food and better conditions.

After travelling a long distance, he came to a certain town. I saw a door open in one of the houses due to the negligence of a rich lady householder. He went into the house, and found abundant food. He had not eaten for a long time, and ate to his heart's content. Then he thought of leaving silently.

No sooner had he come out of the house, he was spotted by other dogs of the neighbourhood. The realized he did not belong to their community and chased him. Since, he had his stomach full, he could not run fast, and they bit him all over with their sharp teeth.

He somehow escaped, and thought, "It is better to live in peace in one's own country, be it affected by famine. I will rather return home."

When he returned to his country, the starving dogs there were curious. His friends and relatives gathered around him to enquire about his findings, "Please tell us about the foreign country you visited. How is it like? How are the people? Is there plenty of food?"

The dog said, "O friends and relatives! What can I say? In the foreign country, the women are careless. They leave doors and windows open. There is lots of food to eat. But, your own kind of animals will not show any sympathy. They will torment you to death."

4. The Cunning Mediator



Two partridges lived in a certain tree in the jungle. While one of them lived on the branches, the other lived inside a hole at the foot of the tree.



A partridge

They became good friends, and they would spend long hours with each other telling each other stories and events of their lives. In this manner, the partridges spent their time in happiness.

One day, one of them went away with some more partridges in search of food.

As was usual, when he did not return back even at sunset, the other partridge started worrying. He thought, "He has not done this ever. Why has the partridge not returned home today? Has been trapped by some hunter? Or maybe even killed? I cannot live without him. I am certain there is some reason why he has not returned even at nightfall."

He did not return even the next day, or the day after. For several days, the partridge kept worrying, and then gave up hope of his friend's return. And so, I spent several days worrying.

On nightfall, a hare came to the tree and observing an empty hole at the foot of the tree, took shelter inside. Since, the partridge had given up hope, he did not object to the hole being occupied by the hare.

After a few days the partridge returned. He had gone to a place where there was plenty of food to eat. He had grown fat, but remembering his dear friend, he thought of returning.

On his return, when he found that a hare had taken over his house, he objected strongly, "Hare! This hole is my home, and you have taken over during my absence. This is very unfair of you. I demand you to leave immediately."

The hare disagreed, "This place is mine now. I am not leaving. I found this hole empty, and therefore made it my home." Thus, they began to quarrel.

The partridge understood there was no point in quarrelling with the hare, and said, "Hare! You seem to lack the basic ethics. Let us approach someone holy and knowledgeable. Let someone well-versed in holy books decide who is right, and thus, who shall have the right to occupy the hole."

The hare agreed, and as suggested they went to look for a holy man to settle their dispute.

Meanwhile, a wild tom-cat became aware that they wanted to settle their dispute through a holy man. He quickly posed as a learned animal. He held a blade of holy Kusha grass in his paw and stood on the bank of a river, where he will be quickly spotted.

Standing on his hind legs, with his eyes closed, he started chanting.

When the partridge and the hare came across him, the hare said, "He looks holy, and a learned person. Let us go and seek his advice."

The partridge agreed but said, "Yes, let us seek his opinion. But he is a wild cat by birth, and a natural enemy for both of us. We should be careful, and speak only from a distance."

As decided, they came to the wild tom-cat, but stood at a distance, "Holy person! We have a dispute amongst us. Will you please settle our dispute and advise us who is right in accordance to Holy Scriptures. If you decide that one of us has sinned, you may as well eat him!"

The tom-cat replied, "O my friends, I have denounced the violent life as it leads to hell. Non-violence is the very essence of true religion. I shall not harm any of you. However, I will hear both of you and settle your dispute with the knowledge I have gained."

Both the partridge and the hare were impressed. The wild tom-cat continued, "But I am old, and cannot hear you from that distance. Fear not! I do not even harm a lice, bug or a mosquito. Come close, and explain the reason of your dispute. I shall make the most just settlement."

With all these sayings, he won the confidence of both of them. Both the partridge and the hare came near him and sat close to him to explain the reason of their dispute.

This was the very opportunity that the tom-cat was looking for. As soon as they sat beside him, he jumped and seized one of them in his teeth and the other with his claws. He killed both of them and made a meal out of them.

The wise indeed say:

Beware of a rascal who pretends to be holy.

5. The Bug and the Poor Flea



Once upon a time, there was a little white flea named Pissu. She lived in the soft, white sheets on the bed of a king. She would drink the king's blood without anyone knowing and was very happy.

One day, a bug came into the king's pretty bedroom. When the flea saw him, she said, "Oh no, Bug! You shouldn't be here! You have to leave before you get caught!"

The bug said, "But I'm a guest! You should be nice to me and give me something to eat."

The bug also said, "I've eaten lots of different blood, but I've never tasted the blood of a king. It must be really yummy because the king eats really good food. Can I please try some of the king's blood?"

The flea was surprised and said, "Oh Bug, your bite is really sharp like a needle. And I only drink the king's blood when he's sleeping really deeply. I'll let you drink some of his blood if you promise to wait until he's asleep."

The bug promised and said, "I'll wait until the king is asleep and only after you've had some will I have some too."

After they made this promise, the king came into his bedroom and lay down to sleep.

But the bug couldn't wait and decided to take a little bite of the king even though he wasn't asleep yet. The king felt the sharp bite and jumped.

He yelled at his helpers, "Hey! Something bit me in my bed! Find it because it already bit me!"

When he heard this, the bug quickly hid in a corner of the bed before the helpers could start looking for him.

But the helpers looked everywhere in the bed and found the flea hiding in the sheets. They killed her right away and then the king went back to sleep without any more problems.

This story teaches us that sometimes people make promises that they don't keep. The flea trusted that the bug would wait until she had some blood before he had some too, but he didn't keep his promise and she got in trouble because of it. So we have to be careful when we trust other people's promises.