



Learn English Through Stories

Panchtantra Tales

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21. Beware of Mean Friends



Once upon a time, there lived a Lion by the name of Sheira in a forest. Among his followers, a Jackal, a Crow and a Wolf had developed friendship with him. However, all the three had a selfish motive behind this so-called friendship. They knew that the Lion was the King of the forest and friendship with such fierce creature would always help them. To meet their selfish ends, they started obeying and were always available at the service of the Lion.

They didn't have to make any efforts to search for their food, as the Lion used to give his leftover meals to them. Moreover, they became powerful as they were next to the King of the forest. So like this, all the three selfish friends were passing their days happily being the friends of the Lion. One day, a Camel, who came from some distant land, lost his way and entered the same forest where these friends lived. He tried his best to find out the way, but could not make it.

In the meantime, these three friends happened to pass through the same way where the Camel was wandering. When they saw the Camel, at once it came to their mind that he didn't belong to their forest. The Jackal suggested to his other two friends, "Let's kill and eat him". The Wolf replied, "It is a big animal. We could not kill him like this. I think, first we should inform our King about this Camel". The Crow agreed upon the idea given by the Wolf. After deciding, all of them went to meet the Lion.

On reaching the Lion's den, the Jackal approached the Lion and said, "Your Majesty, an unknown Camel has dared to enter your kingdom without your consent. His body is full of flesh and he could make a nice meal for us. Let's kill him". The Lion roared loudly on hearing this and said, "What are you saying? The Camel has come for refuge in my kingdom. It is unethical to kill him like this. We should provide him the best shelter. Go and bring him to me". All of them got dispirited to hear such words from the King.

They unwillingly went to the Camel and told him about the desire of the Lion, who wanted to meet him. The Camel was scared to know about the strange offer. He thought that his last moment had come and in a little while he would become the meal of the Lion. As he couldn't even escape, so he decided to meet the Lion and left everything on the destiny. The selfish friends escorted

the Camel to the Lion's den. The Lion was happy to see the Camel. He welcomed him warmly and assured him of all the safety in the forest during his stay.

The Camel was totally amazed to hear the Lion's words. He got very happy and started living with the Jackal, the Crow and the Wolf. One day, when the Lion was hunting for food, he had a struggle with a mighty Elephant. The Lion got badly injured in the struggle and became incapable of hunting for his food. Stricken by bad luck, the Lion had to sustain without food for days. Due to this, his friends too had to go hungry for days as they totally depended on the Lion's kill for their food. But the Camel was satisfied grazing around in the forest.

All the three friends got worried and discussed the matter among them. On reaching a conclusion, they approached the Lion and said, "Your Majesty, you are getting weak day by day. We can't see you in this wretched condition. Why don't you kill the Camel and eat him?" The Lion roared, "No. How can you think such thing? He is our guest and we should not kill him. Don't give such suggestions to me in future". As the jackal, the crow and the wolf had set their evil eyes on the camel; they met once again and devised a plan to kill the Camel.

They went to the Camel and said, "Dear Friend, you know our King has not eaten anything from the past many days. He is unable to go for hunting due to his wounds and sickness. Under such circumstances, it becomes our duty to sacrifice ourselves to save the life of our king. Come with us, we will offer our bodies to make his food". The Camel didn't understand their plan, but innocently he nodded in favour of their plan. All of them approached the den of the Lion.

First of all, the Crow came forward and said, "Your Majesty, we didn't succeed in getting any food for you. I can't see you like this. Please eat me and make me obliged". The Lion replied, "Dear, I will prefer to die than to perform such a sinful deed". Then, the Jackal came forward and said, "Your Majesty, Crow's body is too small to satisfy your appetite. I offer myself to you, as it is my duty to save your life". The Lion politely rejected the offer. As per the plan, now it was the turn of the Wolf to offer himself to the King.

So, the Wolf came forward and said, "Your Majesty, Jackal is quite small to gratify your hunger. I offer myself for this kind job. Please kill me and satisfy your hunger". After saying this, he lay prostrate before the Lion. But the Lion didn't kill any of them. The Camel, who was watching the whole scene felt reassured of his safety and also decided to go forward and complete the formality. He marched forward and said, "Your Majesty, why don't you kill me.

You are my friend. A friend in need is a friend indeed. Please allow me to offer you my body”.

The Lion found the offer quite appropriate, as the Camel himself had offered his body for food, his ethics were maintained. The Lion attacked the Camel at once, ripped open his body and tore him into pieces. The Lion and his friends ate the delicious flesh to their fill. They feasted on the poor Camel for days together.

Moral: Beware of Mean Friends.

22. The Fall and Rise of a Merchant



In a city called Vardha, lived a very efficient and prosperous merchant.

The king was aware of his abilities, and therefore made him the administrator of the kingdom.

With his efficient and intelligent ways, he kept common man very happy, and at the same time he impressed the king on the other side. Such a person, who can keep everybody happy, is rarely found.

Later, there came a time that the merchant's daughter was getting married. He arranged for a lavish reception.

The merchant not only invited the king and the queen, who obliged by attending, but he also invited the entire royal household and all respected people of the kingdom.

During the reception, he ensured to provide his guests with the best of treatments. He gave out gifts to guests to show them respect for attending to his invitation.

A servant of the royal household, who used to sweep the palace, was not invited but attended the reception.

He took a seat which was reserved for royal nobles, not meant for common invitees.

This made the merchant very angry. He caught him by the neck and ordered his servants to have him thrown out.

The royal servant felt very insulted, and could not sleep all night. He thought, "If I can have the king to disfavour this merchant, I will have my revenge. But what can I, a common fellow, do to harm a powerful person as him". Thinking such, he suddenly had a plan.

Several days later, the servant was sweeping the floor near the king's bed early in the morning. He observed that that the king was still in bed, half awake. The servant started mumbling, "Good heavens! The merchant has become so carefree now that he dared to embrace the queen!"

When the king heard this lying in his bed, he jumped up and asked the servant, "Is it true? Have you seen the merchant embrace my queen yourself?"

The servant at once fell at the king's feet, "O Master, I didn't feel well night. I feel drowsy for I didn't sleep last night. I don't know what I have been mumbling, but I said anything improper, please forgive me."

The king spoke no more, but the servant knew he had sowed the seed of distrust. The king thought, "It can be true! The servant moves about the palace freely, and so does the merchant. It is possible that the servant has seen something."

The king was troubled with jealousy. From that day onwards, he withdrew his favours from the merchant and even forbade him to enter the palace.

One day, when the merchant was entering the gateway to the palace, he was stopped by the guards. The merchant was surprised due to this sudden change in the king's attitude.

The servant was nearby, and mocking shouted at the guards, "O Guards! That merchant is favoured by the king. He is a powerful person. He can have people arrested or released or even thrown out, just like he had me thrown out of his daughter's reception. Beware, for you may suffer the same fate."

On hearing this, the merchant understood that the servant has caused all this trouble somehow. He felt dejected, and returned home upset over the incident.

He gave everything a second thought, and then he invited the royal servant to his house. He treated the servant with utmost respect, and flattered him with gifts and garments. He said kindly, "O friend, that day I did not have you thrown out due to anger, but it was improper of you to occupy the seat reserved for the royal nobles. They felt insulted, and out of compulsion I had to throw you out. Please forgive me."

The servant was already flattered with all the gifts, and he was full of joy, "Sir, I forgive you. You have not only expressed your regrets, but also honoured me with utmost respect."

He ensured the merchant, "I will prove you how clever I am. I will have the king favourable towards you, like he was before". The servant went back home.

Early next morning, when he started sweeping the floors of the palace, he waited till when the king was lying half-awake.

When the opportunity came, he started sweeping around his bed and started mumbling, "Our king is crazy, he eats cucumber in the lavatory!"

On hearing this, the king was taken aback. He got up angrily and shouted at the servant, "What nonsense do you talk about? Had you not been by royal servant, I would have punished you dearly. Have you ever seen me doing such thing yourself?"

Once again the servant fell on his knees and prayed, "O Master, please forgive me if I said something improper. I was not well last night and didn't sleep. I feel drowsy and I don't know what I have been mumbling."

The king thought to himself, "I have never eaten a cucumber in the lavatory. What he mumbled about me is ridiculously false. Surely then, what he mumbled about my trusted merchant the other morning must have been ridiculously false too. It was improper of me to mistreat the merchant."

He wondered, "After all he has been so efficient in the whole administrative system, that without him it has become slack."

Thus, having considered carefully, the king invited the merchant to the palace and flattered him with gifts, jewels and garments. He re-appointed the merchant to his previously held position, and favoured his services as before.

The wise indeed say:

One should treat one and all, even the lowest, with respect.

23. The Boys and the Frogs



Once upon a time, there was a large pond in the village. A big family of frogs used to live in the pond. The frogs and the villagers were living in harmony together. The frogs kept the insects away from the pond. The villagers used to draw water from the pond. The villagers lived happily.

Two boys, Ramu and Shamu, lived in the village. One day, they were on holiday. Their school was closed. They did not want to do their homework. They were bored. They decided to go to the pond. After reaching the pond, they thought, “Hey, would it not be fun if we could throw some stones into the pond?”

They started throwing stones into the water and watched the water splash. The boys were enjoying themselves very much. But while they were enjoying, the frogs were trembling in fear. Many of the stones were big enough to hurt the frogs. The frogs had to hide, still, they were not safe.

Finally the oldest of the Frogs put his head out of the water and said to the boys, “My dear children. I can see that you are enjoying yourselves very much. It may be fun for you but did you think that this may mean death to us?”

24. The blacksmith and His Dog



Once, in a village, lived a blacksmith. His name was Luhara. He owned a pet dog. The dog's name was Sluggard. Luhara was always very busy, hammering away at his anvil. He made many tools: hoes, rakes, spades, sickles, and many more.

His dog Sluggard loved to sleep and hated work. Nothing could break his sleep: the sound of a hammer, the coughing noise of the blacksmith, etc. But, as soon as the blacksmith stopped to eat something, the dog woke up and wagged his tail.

One day, Luhara pretended to be angry. He shook his stick and said, "You lazy, sluggard dog! You sleep all day long. Whenever I try to eat a morsel of food, you wake up and expect titbits of my food. You must remember this: those who do not work deserve to starve."

The dog said, "Master Ji, I am very sorry. I have not told you before. I tell you now. I sleep during the day and work at night. I go to college. I am learning to be a Robotic Engineer. Time is changing. You do not need to do everything by hand. In future, everything will be manufactured in an automated environment..."

25. The Donkey and the Statue



There was once a man whose name was Ghumara. He had a donkey named Khota. The man made the donkey toll very hard. Ghumara whipped and lashed Khota with a stick. Khota was very unhappy.

One day, the villagers built a temple and asked Ghumara to bring a statue from the town. Ghumara went to the town with his donkey. On the way back, when Khota was carrying the statue of a religious deity – Ganesh - he had to stop on the road whenever devotees came forward to pay respect to the deity. The stupid donkey thought all the devotion was meant for him. He enjoyed all the attention. His master Ghumara saw the foolishness of Khota.

He hit Khota hard with a stick and scolded him saying, “Move along, foolish beast. Do you think that these people are paying respect to you? It is only the statue you are carrying that has created this devotion. Only fools take credit due to others.”

The donkey admitted his mistake. A year later, the villagers built a school for children. Ghumara went with his donkey to bring books for the children. On the way back, when the donkey was carrying the books on his back, nobody came to pay respect to the books.”

The donkey thought to himself, “My master and other people in the village call me a foolish donkey. They all bow down their heads before the statue but not before the books. The books are full of knowledge; the statue is clay with some artistic work. I think they are the biggest fool themselves – blind faith...”

