



Learn English Through Stories

Panchatantra Tales

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## 45. The Lion and the Vixen



In a sprawling forest, there once lived a lion, solitary and proud, with no pride or kin to call his own. One fateful day, while pursuing a swift wild horse through the tangled undergrowth, he stumbled and shattered his right hind leg. The injury left him hobbled, unable to hunt with his former ferocity. Days turned to weeks, and hunger gnawed at his once-mighty frame. Desperate yet cunning, the lion devised a plan.

He sent a message through the whispering winds to his only companions—the Wolf and the Vixen—crafting his words with care:

"Dear friends,

We are but fleeting shadows in this world, destined to fade. Before my time runs dry, I yearn for one last gathering, a feast to bind us in memory. You may have heard of my misfortune—my hind leg broken last month, my strength waning. I am a shadow of the king I once was, teetering on the edge of death. Before I depart for whatever lies beyond, I crave the tender meat of a stag, a barasinga. Many roam near my den, taunting me with their grace. Alone, I am powerless, but together, we might claim one. I regret the days I hoarded my kills, offering no share. To err is the way of beasts, but to forgive is the gift of friends."

The next morning, the Wolf and the Vixen arrived at the lion's den, moved by his plea—or perhaps lured by the promise of a meal. The trio set out, the lion limping alongside the Wolf's eager strides and the Vixen's cautious steps. In a nearby field, they spied a magnificent stag, its antlers gleaming in the sun as it grazed. With a burst of effort, they cornered and felled the beast, its life extinguished in a flurry of fang and claw.

Exhausted but triumphant, they gathered around the kill to divide their prize. The Wolf, bold and straightforward, stepped forward first. He carved the stag into three equal portions, his eyes glinting with pride at his fairness. But the lion's gaze darkened. Equal shares? For him, the king of the forest, weakened or not? With a roar, he lunged, his claws rending the Wolf's flesh in an instant. The Wolf crumpled, lifeless, a lesson in blood upon the grass.

The lion turned to the Vixen, his voice a low growl. "Now, you divide it."

The Vixen paused, her sharp eyes flicking to the Wolf's still form. A thought flickered in her mind: In this world, greatness lies not in what we seize, but in what we surrender. Better to learn from another's folly than bleed for my own. With quiet deliberation, she nudged the three portions into a single heap, then delicately plucked a modest sliver for herself, leaving the rest—a mountain of meat—for the lion.

The lion blinked, astonishment softening his snarl. "Who taught you such a clever division?" he rumbled.

The Vixen sat back, her tail curling neatly around her paws. "Dear King," she began, "I was born under the stars of late March, an Aries by fate. My sign is the ram—a creature of fire, not the kind that consumes forests or fields, but a spark that kindles courage, passion, and clarity. It teaches me to weigh the moment, to see beyond the hunger of the now. I've learned that survival is an art, and wisdom its brush."

The lion regarded her, his amber eyes narrowing with something like respect. For a long moment, silence hung between them, broken only by the rustle of leaves in the breeze. Then, with a slow nod, he reached for the heap and divided it anew—not into three, nor into one and a scrap, but into two equal shares. He pushed one toward the Vixen.

"Eat," he said gruffly. "A king may rule, but a friend endures."

And so they feasted, the lion and the Vixen, not as predator and prey, but as equals forged by necessity and a flicker of understanding. The forest watched, and the wind carried their tale—a whisper of wisdom amid the wild.

## The Lion and the Vixen: Version 2

Once, in a vast forest, there lived a lion all on his own. He had no family to share his days with. One day, whilst chasing a wild horse through the trees, he tripped and broke his right back leg. After that, he couldn't hunt properly anymore. Feeling hungry and weak, the lion came up with a clever idea.

He sent a message to his mates—the Wolf and the Vixen—using the breeze to carry his words:

"Dear friends,

None of us lives forever. One day, we'll all be gone. Before that happens, I'd love for us to get together and have a proper feast. You might've heard I smashed my leg last month, and now I can't run fast. I'm knackered and reckon I'm near the end. Before I pop off to Heaven or Hell, I fancy some venison—you know, stag meat. There are loads of stags near my den. Together, we could nab one. I'm sorry for not sharing my kills before. Mistakes happen, but mates forgive, don't they?"

The next day, the Wolf and the Vixen turned up at the lion's den and agreed to help. The three of them—limping lion, eager Wolf, and sly Vixen—headed to a field nearby. They spotted a big stag munching grass. They chased it, caught it, and brought it down. Time to share the meal.

The Wolf stepped up first. He split the stag into three equal bits, looking chuffed with himself. But the lion wasn't having it. Equal shares? For him, the king of the forest? With a roar, he leapt at the Wolf and finished him off in a flash.

Then the lion turned to the Vixen. "You divide it," he growled.

The Vixen stopped and thought for a sec. She glanced at the dead Wolf and told herself, It's not what you grab that matters, it's what you let go. Learn from his mistake, or you're next. Calmly, she pushed the three bits into one big pile, then took a tiny piece for herself, leaving the rest for the lion.

The lion stared, gobsmacked. "Who taught you to divvy up like that?" he asked.

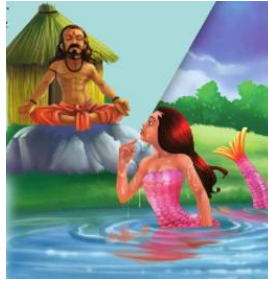
The Vixen sat back, tail tucked round her paws. "Dear King," she said, "I was born late March, so I'm an Aries. That's a ram—a fiery sort, but not the kind that burns stuff down. It's a fire that makes you brave and smart. It helps me think straight and stay sharp. That's how I survive."

The lion looked at her, impressed. He didn't say much, just nodded. Then he split the meat into two equal piles and shoved one towards her.

"Eat," he grunted. "A king rules, but a mate sticks around."

So they ate together, the lion and the Vixen, not as boss and follower, but as equals. The forest watched, and the wind spread their story—a tale of brains beating brawn.

## 46. The Nymph and the Ascetic



In a quiet village nestled among rolling hills, there lived a man named Bhagta. At the tender age of twenty, he married a spirited woman named Phuljhari—affectionately nicknamed Pataka, a firecracker, for her vibrant and unpredictable nature. Their life together flickered with promise, but fate had other plans. One year, Bhagta journeyed to the Kumbh Mela, a grand pilgrimage of soul and spectacle. When he returned, weary but hopeful, Phuljhari was nowhere to be found.

Bewildered, Bhagta sought answers from his neighbours. Chaachi Meeto, a blunt woman with sharp eyes, met him at her doorstep. “No use dancing around it,” she said, folding her arms. “Phuljhari ran off with a truck driver. Last I heard, they were headed for Kolkata. That’s all I know.”

The words struck Bhagta like a thunderbolt. Shame burned in his chest, hotter than the village sun. Unable to bear the whispers and sidelong glances of his neighbours, he abandoned his home and fled to the wilderness. There, in a forest cradling a serene lake, he shed his past like old skin and embraced the life of an ascetic.

Years passed, and Bhagta found solace in solitude. One crisp morning, as he sat in meditation on the lake’s mossy bank, the water rippled softly. From its depths emerged a jalpari—a water nymph—her skin shimmering like moonlight on waves, her eyes deep and endless. She gazed at Bhagta, his rugged face softened by stillness, and her heart stirred. A man so striking should not waste his youth in penance, she thought.

With a voice as sweet as a monsoon breeze, she began to sing a Hindi song:

“Sukh bhi kabhi, dukh bhi kabhi,

Hum na honge juda.

Sukh bhi kabhi, dukh bhi kabhi,

Meri saanson mein tu basa,

Meri zindagi teri chhaya,

Main sada karoon teri pooja.

Yeh teri nek kamaai,

Hum na honge juda.”

\*(Happiness at times, sadness at times,

\*We will not part.

\*In my breaths, you reside,

\*My life is your shadow,

\*I will forever worship you.

\*These are your good deeds,

We will not part.)

Bhagta remained still, his breath steady, lost in his inner silence. Undeterred, the nymph clapped her hands, sending a playful splash across the water. “Dear handsome one,” she called, “save your meditation for grey hairs and creaking bones! You’re too young for such a heavy burden.”

At this, Bhagta’s eyes fluttered open. A faint smile curved his lips as he beheld her radiant beauty. “My dear lady,” he said, his voice gentle yet firm, “you are a vision, and your song weaves truth into melody. Happiness and sadness are indeed old companions. I wasn’t always an ascetic, you know. I became one when my wife—my Pataka—left me. She fled with a truck driver, and the village turned my pain into their jest. They laughed, and for them, it was medicine. For me, it was poison. Now you stand before me, offering love. But what if tomorrow you tire of me and swim away with—forgive me—a crocodile?”

The nymph laughed, a sound like chiming bells, but her eyes softened with understanding. “I see the weight you’ve carried,” she said. “The cruelty of tongues is a burden no man should bear alone. I won’t press you—your heart must choose its path.”

Bhagta fell silent, his gaze drifting across the lake. In his mind, two women danced: Phuljhari, the firecracker who burned out and left ashes, and this nymph, a celestial flame born of water and grace. Man receives what fate decrees, he mused. After a long pause, he met her eyes and nodded, a quiet surrender to destiny.



And so, the knot was tied—not with thread or ceremony, but with trust and a shared song. By the lake's edge, beneath the watchful trees, Bhagta and the nymph wove a life of joy, where happiness and sadness flowed together like the waters that cradled their love. And there they remained, ever after.

## The Nymph and the Ascetic: Version 2

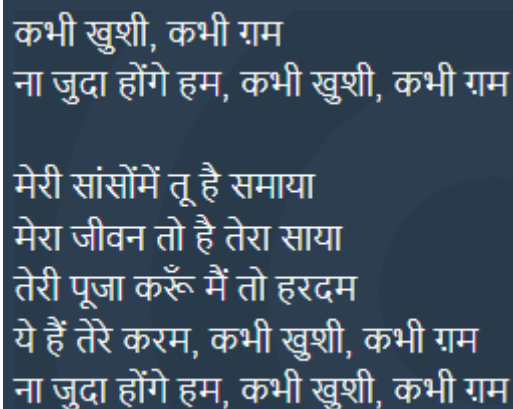
In a small village tucked among green hills, there lived a man called Bhagta. He was just twenty when he got married. His wife's name was Phuljhari, but everyone called her Pataka—a firecracker—because she was full of life. One year, Bhagta went to the Kumbh Mela, a big festival far away. When he came back, tired but happy, Phuljhari wasn't at home.

Worried, he went to his neighbours. Chaachi Meeto, an older woman who spoke her mind, was outside her house. "No point faffing about," she said, arms crossed. "Phuljhari ran off with a truck driver. I reckon they went to Kolkata. That's all I've got."

Bhagta's face burned with shame. He couldn't stand the village gossip, so he packed up and left. He turned into an ascetic—a holy man who gives up everything. He found a forest with a calm lake and made a simple life there.

One morning, Bhagta was meditating by the lake. The water moved, and a water nymph—a jalpari—came up. She had shiny skin like moonlight and deep eyes. She looked at Bhagta, handsome even in his plain robes, and fell in love. He's too good-looking for this tough life, she thought.

She sang a Hindi song in a sweet voice:



कभी खुशी, कभी गम  
ना जुदा होंगे हम, कभी खुशी, कभी गम  
  
मेरी सांसोंमें तू है समाया  
मेरा जीवन तो है तेरा साया  
तेरी पूजा करूँ मैं तो हरदम  
ये हैं तेरे करम, कभी खुशी, कभी गम  
ना जुदा होंगे हम, कभी खुशी, कभी गम

\*(Happiness sometimes, sadness sometimes,

\*We won't be apart.

\*You're in my breath,

\*My life is your shadow,

\*I'll always pray to you.

\*These are your good deeds,

We won't be apart.)

Bhagta didn't move—he kept meditating. The nymph clapped her hands and splashed the water. "Oi, handsome!" she called. "Save the meditating for when you're old! You're too young for this hard life."

Bhagta opened his eyes and gave a small smile. "You're lovely," he said, "and your song's beautiful. It's true—happiness and sadness come together. I wasn't always an ascetic. My wife left me for a truck driver. The village lot laughed at me. It was a joke to them, but it hurt me bad. You like me now, but what if you leave me tomorrow for—sorry—a crocodile?"

The nymph giggled, but her eyes were kind. "I get it," she said. "That was rough. People can be mean. I won't push you—it's your choice."

Bhagta went quiet, thinking hard. He pictured his old wife, wild like a firecracker, and this nymph, pretty and gentle like the lake. You get what life gives you, he thought. After a bit, he looked at her and nodded.

So, they stayed together—no big fuss, just a promise. By the cosy lake, with trees all around, Bhagta and the nymph made a happy life. Happiness and sadness mixed together, like water in the lake, and they lived a long life together.