



Learn English Through Stories

Panchatantra Tales

**Adopted and modified by  
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

<https://learn-by-reading.co.uk>

## 18. The King's Elephant and Her Best Friend – Version 2

In a sprawling kingdom nestled amid verdant hills and shimmering rivers, there reigned a benevolent monarch whose affection for animals knew no bounds. He could not abide the sight of any creature suffering from hunger or injury, and thus, his opulent palace became a sanctuary for a myriad of beasts. Exotic birds from distant lands graced his aviaries, their melodious songs filling the air each dawn and dusk. In the expansive stables, horses of noble breeds from across the globe stood ready to draw his gilded carriage through the bustling streets. Yet, amid this menagerie, the king's heart was irrevocably captured by a majestic elephant, whom he cherished above all others.

This elephant, a gentle giant with wise eyes and a swaying trunk, accompanied the king on his royal processions. Perched upon a lavishly adorned howdah atop her broad back, the king surveyed his realm, dispensing justice and benevolence to his subjects. To ensure her utmost well-being, he commissioned a spacious enclosure, replete with shaded groves and a crystal-clear pond. A dedicated caretaker was appointed to tend to her needs around the clock, feeding her an abundance of succulent fruits and crisp vegetables. However, despite this lavish care, the elephant often found herself grappling with a profound sense of isolation.

The king, burdened by the weight of governance, could only visit sporadically, his presence a fleeting joy in her otherwise monotonous days. The caretaker, though dutiful in his basic tasks, was indolent by nature, often turning a blind eye to her emotional needs. When not occupied with menial chores or fraternizing with the palace staff, he would doze off in the shade, leaving the elephant to her own devices. She yearned for companionship—a kindred spirit to share her thoughts and frolics. In her quieter moments, she pondered the idiom "a friend in need is a friend indeed," wondering if such a bond could ever grace her life.

One fateful afternoon, as the sun cast long shadows across the palace grounds, a stray dog, emaciated and staggering from voracious hunger, wandered into the elephant's domain. His ribs protruded starkly beneath his mangy fur, and his eyes darted desperately in search of sustenance. Spotting the bountiful trough brimming with fresh produce, he lunged forward without a second thought, devouring the morsels ravenously. The elephant, observing this intrusion from her vantage point, felt no ire; instead, compassion stirred within her. She recognized the desperation etched in his every bite and chose to let him partake, for she had plenty to spare.

Sated at last, the dog lifted his head, his tail wagging tentatively. Overcome with remorse, he approached her with lowered ears. "I apologize profusely for my impudence," he whimpered. "Hunger clouded my judgment, but your kindness has saved me." The elephant, touched by his humility, extended her trunk in a gesture of welcome. "Do not fret; we all hit rock bottom at times. Stay with me, and let us forge a friendship that will weather any storm." Delighted, the dog agreed, and thus began an unbreakable alliance.

From that day forth, the duo became inseparable, their camaraderie a beacon of joy in the elephant's shelter. They engaged in playful antics—the dog darting between her massive legs, while she gently sprayed him with water from the pond. Meals were shared with laughter, and evenings were spent under the stars, exchanging tales of their pasts. The caretaker, ever the slothful observer, paid little heed to this new addition, preferring to while away his hours in idle chatter with the housekeepers. As the dog flourished on the nutritious fare, growing plump and vigorous, their bond deepened to the point where separation seemed inconceivable.

Alas, fortune took a cruel turn when a shrewd farmer, visiting the palace on business, caught sight of the now robust canine. "What a fine specimen!" he exclaimed to the caretaker. "He'd make an excellent guardian for my fields. I'll pay handsomely for him." The caretaker, his eyes gleaming with avarice, could not resist the lure of easy coin. Without a qualm, he pocketed the silver and handed over the dog, who was whisked away to a distant farmstead. There, the dog was relegated to nocturnal vigils, subsisting on meagre scraps, his spirit waning as he pined for his companion. He often thought, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," but the pain was unbearable.

Back at the palace, the elephant's world crumbled. She paced restlessly, her trunk probing the empty corners where her friend once slept. Worry gnawed at her; did he have enough to eat? Was he treated kindly? Her appetite vanished, and melancholy enveloped her like a shroud. She grew gaunt and listless, her once-vibrant eyes dulled by sorrow. The caretaker, realizing the gravity of his folly, trembled with fear. He knew that revealing his greed would incur the king's wrath, for the dog was not his to sell. In a bid to cover his tracks, he reported only the elephant's ailment to the sovereign.

The king, upon hearing of his beloved elephant's decline, was stricken with concern. He interrogated the caretaker relentlessly, but the man feigned ignorance, claiming the illness had struck without warning. Undeterred, the king summoned the realm's most eminent veterinarian, a sage practitioner versed in animal maladies. After a thorough examination, the doctor declared, "Your Majesty, this is no physical affliction; her heart is heavy with grief. She mourns the loss of something dear." Perplexed, the king convened an assembly of all palace dwellers, demanding answers.

Whispers rippled through the crowd until the housekeepers, unable to contain the truth, let the cat out of the bag. They recounted the heart-warming friendship between the elephant and the stray dog, and how the latter had mysteriously vanished. Under the king's piercing gaze, the caretaker crumbled, confessing his treacherous deed. Though he could not pinpoint the farmer's whereabouts, the king acted decisively. Proclamations were dispatched across the land, offering a princely reward for the dog's return—a sum that would turn heads far and wide.

Word spread like wildfire, eventually reaching the farmer's ears. Tempted by the bounty, he hastened back to the palace with the dog in tow. The reunion was a spectacle of pure elation: the elephant trumpeted joyously, her trunk entwining the dog in a tender embrace, while he yipped and leaped in ecstasy. In the nick of time, their bond was restored, and vitality returned to both. The elephant resumed her hearty meals, regaining her strength, and the dog basked once more in the warmth of friendship.

As for the errant caretaker, justice was swift. He was compelled to refund the ill-gotten gains and was sternly admonished by the king. "Henceforth, you shall tend to both with unwavering diligence," the monarch decreed. "Lest you face exile." Chastened, the caretaker mended his ways, ensuring the pair's every need was met with alacrity. The elephant and her faithful companion lived out their days in harmonious bliss, a testament to the enduring power of true friendship.

In the grand tapestry of life, this tale underscores a timeless moral: separation from one's closest allies inflicts a wound deeper than any blade. It reminds us that friendships, once forged, are treasures to be guarded zealously, for they illuminate even the darkest hours.

## Comprehension Questions

Question 1: What kind of person is the king, and how does he feel about animals?

Question 2: Why is the elephant the king's favourite animal?

Question 3: What does the elephant often feel despite receiving excellent physical care?

Question 4: What does the caretaker usually do when he has no immediate tasks?

Question 5: How does the elephant react when she first sees the hungry stray dog eating her food?

Question 6: What idiom does the elephant think about when she decides to befriend the dog?

Question 7: Why does the caretaker agree to sell the dog to the farmer?

Question 8: Which idiom best describes how the dog feels while living on the farm far away?

Question 9: What does the veterinarian conclude after examining the elephant?

Question 10: How does the story end for the caretaker, and what lesson does the king teach him?

## Answers

Answer 1: The king is benevolent and has a deep affection for animals; he cannot bear to see any creature suffering from hunger or injury.

Answer 2: The elephant is the king's favourite because he cherishes her above all others and rides on her back during royal processions.

Answer 3: Despite her lavish care, the elephant often feels profound isolation and loneliness.

Answer 4: When he has no immediate tasks, the indolent caretaker usually dozes off in the shade or chats idly with the palace staff.

Answer 5: She feels no anger; instead, compassion stirs within her, and she allows him to eat because she understands his desperation.

Answer 6: She thinks about the idiom "a friend in need is a friend indeed."

Answer 7: The caretaker agrees because he is greedy and cannot resist the lure of easy money from the farmer.

Answer 8: The idiom "absence makes the heart grow fonder" best describes how the dog feels, though the separation causes him great pain.

Answer 9: The veterinarian concludes that the elephant is not physically ill; her heart is heavy with grief because she is mourning the loss of her dear friend.

Answer 10: The caretaker must return the money, and the king orders him to care diligently for both animals forever, warning him of exile if he fails again; the moral is that separation from true friends causes deep pain and friendships should be cherished.