

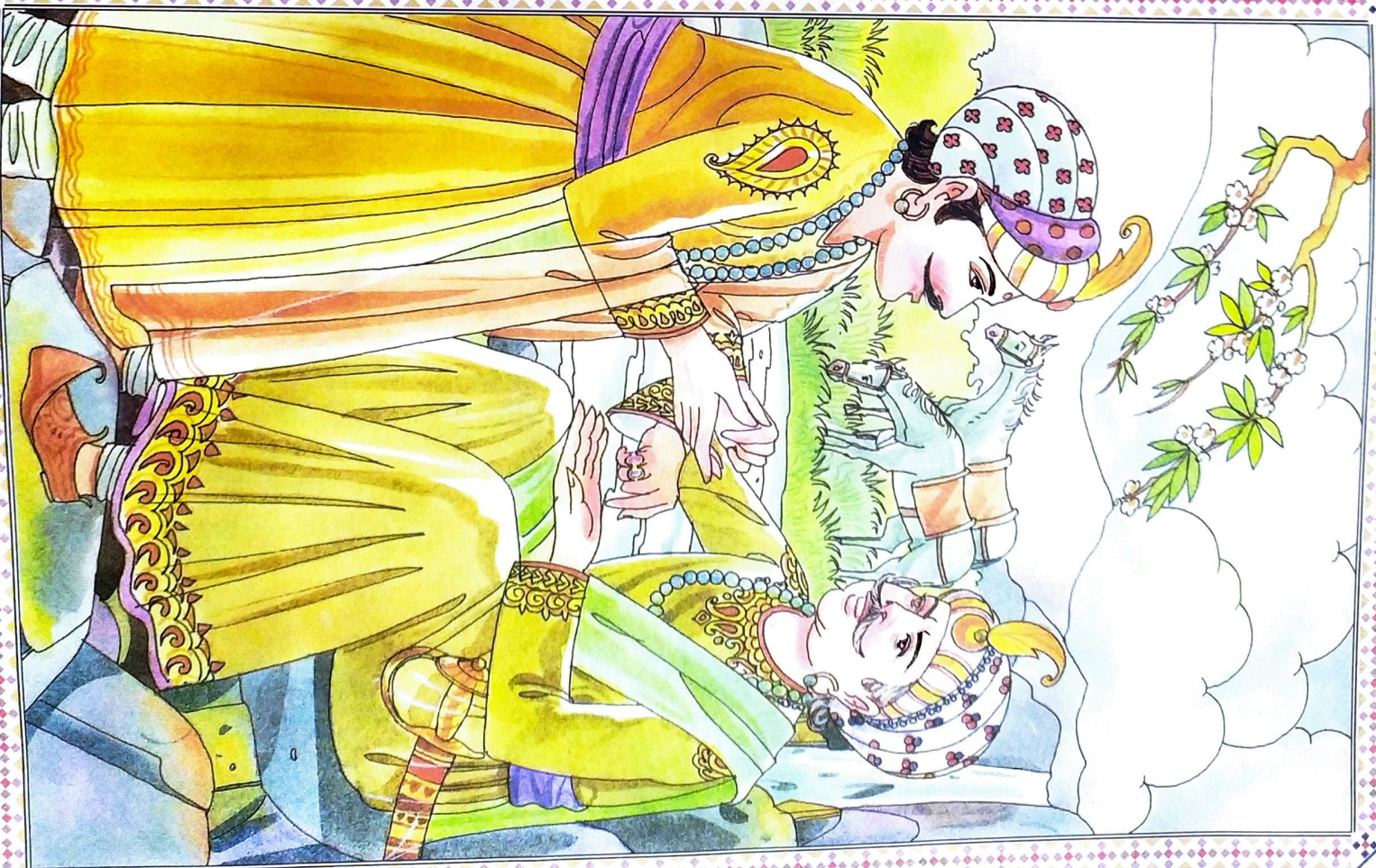
1. WHY IS THERE NO HAIR ON THE PALM?

One day, Akbar and Birbal went for horse riding. They rode on until they reached a small stream. Both were very tired. They dismounted from their horses and drank the cool and refreshing water of the stream. As Akbar was drinking water, he noticed deep marks of reins on his palms. He showed his palms to Birbal. Suddenly, Akbar had an idea. He asked, "Birbal, can you tell me why there is no hair on my palms?"

Birbal said, "Certainly, Your Majesty! Every day you generously give alms to the poor and the needy. And therefore, your palms get rubbed often. That is the reason why there is no hair on your palms."

Akbar was pleased with this explanation as it meant that he was very generous. But again, he said to Birbal, "I agree with what you say. But tell me Birbal, why is there no hair on your palms?"

Birbal said, "Your Majesty! You give me many gifts and rewards every day. My palms get rubbed when I receive them. So there is no hair on my palms, too."



Akbar said to himself, "What a clever fellow Birbal is!" But he still wanted to test Birbal by asking him a more difficult question. He said, "Birbal, I accept your explanation that our palms get rubbed several times during the day. But there is no hair on the palms of our courtiers, too. What reason have you to offer for that?"

Birbal smiled. He said, "Oh, yes! It is quite simple. You give me gifts and rewards every day. The courtiers do not appreciate this. They feel jealous and angry, but they are helpless. So they keep on rubbing their own palms. How can hair ever grow on palms which are always rubbed?" Hearing Birbal's reply, Akbar burst out laughing.

Akbar and Birbal then rode back to the palace.



